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Sight and Sound

EVERY
NEW FILM
AND VIDEO
REVIEWED
INSIDE



Spielberg's children
Scorsese's masquerade
Rivette's obsession
Almodóvar's stilettos
Cassavetes' jazz
**Plus books: from fallen
women to media moguls**

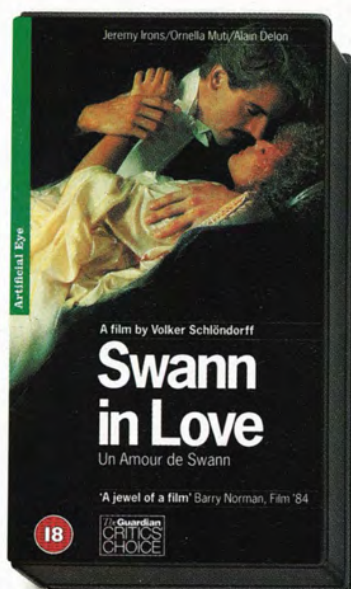
Wim Wenders

In interview: on his film 'Until the End of the World'

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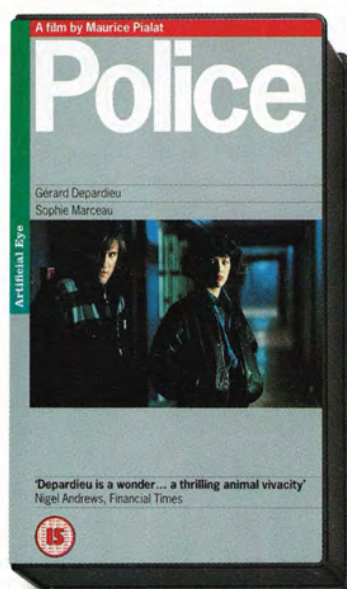
music

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SWANN IN LOVE (Un Amour de Swann)

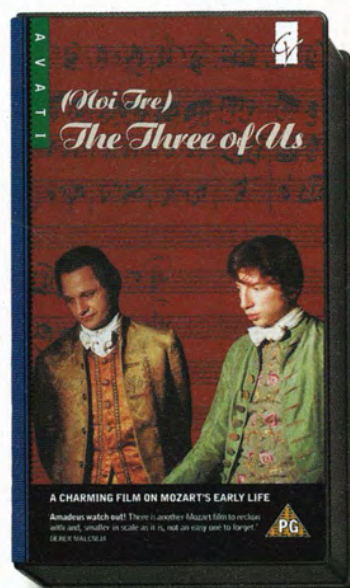
Jeremy Irons is superb in this adaptation of Proust's 'A la Recherche du Temps Perdu'. Irons is the wealthy, elegant Swann, who despite being a Jew, is accepted into the aristocratic circles of nineteenth century Paris. However, his love for the socially inferior Odette (Ornella Muti) threatens his position. 'A beautiful film' - Derek Malcolm, The Guardian.



POLICE Gerard Depardieu won the Best Actor prize at the 1985 Venice Film Festival for his portrayal of the uncompromising inspector in 'Police', the powerful thriller which gave director Maurice Pialat his first huge commercial success in France. 'A clever and compelling film' - Iain Johnstone, Sunday Times. 'A brilliant, provocative movie' - Brian Baxter, Films and Filming.



WILD AT HEART Presented for the first time in its original aspect ratio, and exclusive to Our Price Music and Our Price Video, this special wide screen edition of David Lynch's cult movie captures all the visceral impact and stunning visual sweep of the cinema presentation. Nicolas Cage and Laura Dern star as the young couple whose love for each other takes them on a trip through hell.



THE THREE OF US (Noi Tre) A delightful, touching film that concentrates on the last moments of Mozart's childhood, as the 14 year old prodigy spends a summer preparing for an important exam at the Bologna Philharmonic Academy. In between his studies, he falls in love with a girl from a nearby villa, and decides to fail his exam. 'Elegant and charming' - David Robinson, The Times.

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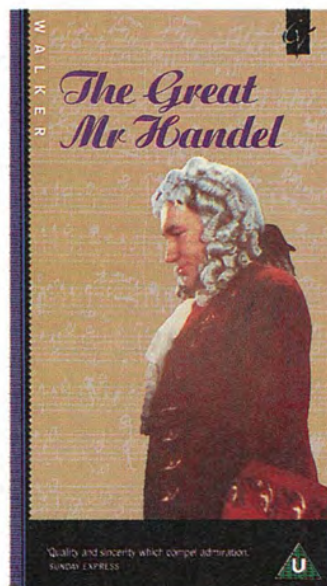
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Green review this month's
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Forthcoming releases



The Great Mr Handel

In 1742, George Frederick Handel created one of his most famous works; *Messiah*. To commemorate the 250th anniversary of this, Connoisseur are releasing Norman Walker's 1942 film, in which the story of the composer's inspirational work is brought to life, with Wilfred Lawson giving one of the on-screen performances of his career.

This video release was made using material restored and preserved by the National Film Archive.



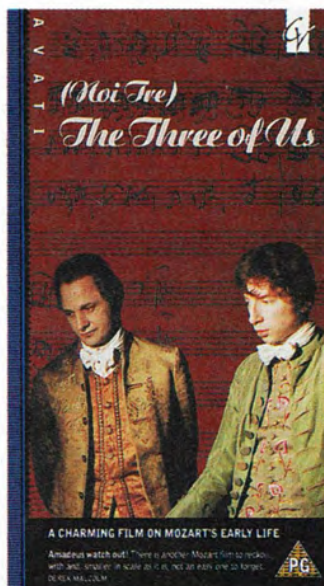
Bill Douglas

British cinema lost one of its most talented sons in 1991 when Bill Douglas lost his battle with cancer. His place in history has, however, been guaranteed with his outstanding autobiographical trilogy.

This is now available on video with the two short films *My Childhood* and *My Ain Folk* on one cassette and *My Way Home* on a second.



All titles are available at the mail order price of £14.99 each plus £1.50 p&p for the first tape and 50p for each additional tape. Credit card bookings only on 081 399 0022.



The Three of Us (Noi Tre)

Still in a musical vein, this month sees the relaunch of Pupi Avati's charming 1984 film. The film won Avati international acclaim as it set out a fictional account of one summer in young Mozart's life.



Philip French, writing in 'The Observer', was of the opinion that 'this trilogy will come to be regarded not just as a milestone, but as one of the heroic achievements of the British cinema.'

The video release was also welcomed by 'The Guardian', who have selected the two cassettes as their Critic's Choice for April.

Full sleeve notes are provided by Derek Malcolm and Tim Pulleine of 'The Guardian'.

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Wenders' new film *To the End of the World* has been described as 'the ultimate road movie' and spans sixteen countries. *Kings of the Road* was shot in eleven weeks and never leaves the territory that was the border between East and West Germany, but in its three hours it shows the director at his most creative.

Nigel Andrews wrote, in the 'Financial Times': 'The film is funny, exuberant, thoughtful, lyrical by turns... I cannot believe there is anyone who will not come away from it a wiser, saner and quite possibly a happier person.'

Connoisseur are happy to offer this video to *Sight and Sound* readers at the special price of £9.99 plus p&p.



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Tragedy and farce

Contributors to this issue

Bin Zhao is a post-graduate student at Loughborough University

David Dabydeen's first novel, *The Intended*, was published in 1991

Walter Donohue has worked on a number of 'Wenders' films and is the co-editor of the soon to be published *Projections*

Thomas Elsaesser is author of the prize-winning *New German Cinema: A History*

Christopher Frayling has recently published a book on Clint Eastwood

Lizzie Francke is writing a book on women screenwriters

Peter Goodwin is working on a book on the recent television franchise auction

Philip Kemp is the author of a recent book on Alexander Mackendrick

Julia Knight has written a book on women and the new German cinema

Rikki Morgan has published widely on Spanish culture

Annette Kuhn teaches film at Glasgow University

Brian Priestley is the author of several books on jazz

Tony Rayns is a freelance writer and curator

Berenice Reynaud is the New York correspondent for *Cahiers du cinéma*

Jonathan Rosenbaum is film critic for the *Chicago Reader*

Philip Strick wrote the introduction to the published script of *Andrei Rublev*

David Thompson is the co-editor of *Scorsese on Scorsese*

Britain as "The Hollywood of Europe?": with admirable caution, the recent BFI/CBI conference on prospects for the UK film industry opted for a title which qualified the hopes of the conference with a question mark. It's been a long time since any country in Europe could be considered a serious industrial centre for international film production – in the way Hollywood is. Perhaps only the UFA studios in Germany in the 20s could lay such a claim.

The Chancellor's budget proposals are hardly likely to bring the present-day Sam Goldwyns here overnight but, together with other recent announcements, they do suggest that 'Lazarus', aka the British Film Industry, is stirring once again. Perhaps among the other recent domestic developments, the suggestion by Channel 4 and BBC that they may act in concert and launch a distribution company to guarantee a UK theatrical release for their feature films is the most significant. It is also a very unsurprising move when one considers that over the last year Ken Loach's *Riff Raff* could not find a UK distributor until it was opened at the NFT; and George Sluizer's *Utz* has not been able to secure a UK theatrical release, despite the acclaim it received at the Berlin Film Festival. The move by Channel 4 and BBC is a sign that television knows not only that production cannot afford to ignore distribution, but that it is likely to have to play an even more important role in British cinema in the near future.

Of course not everyone, here and elsewhere, likes the thought of even greater intimacy between television and cinema – especially since the relationship seems an increasingly unequal one. The role television plays in funding cinema in Europe, together

with its involvement in distribution, can only hasten the day – say the pessimists – when the aesthetic character of films will be exclusively determined by the imperatives of television.

The three pieces devoted to European directors this month are engaged – either implicitly or explicitly – with cinema's relation to what is now called the moving image or media culture, and in which television and video are increasingly the major players. Thomas Elsaesser's article on *La Belle Noiseuse* confronts this issue most directly, since it is Elsaesser's persuasive argument that Rivette's film is self-consciously a response to the crisis of cinema in a moving image culture, one where cinema's hegemonic position is no longer secure. There is no doubt that Rivette's film is fascinating and deserves to be widely distributed, but how seriously can we take its high modernist rejection of the wider moving image culture (it would help us all if someone could formulate a less cumbersome phrase than this)? In his piece Elsaesser quotes Raymond Bellour, the major French film critic, who sees an analogy between the fate of modernist poetry at the end of the last century and the fate of European art cinema at the end of this. There can be little doubt that some of the most distinguished film-makers and film critics are staging their own engagement with present "mass culture" as a re-run of that of the early modernists at the turn of the last century. But if cinema has a future in Europe, surely it cannot be built on saying 'No' to the wider culture – as did the modernists early this century. For everything happens twice in history, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce.

JERRY ON LINE #1

Peter Lydon – James Sillavan ©



'Jerry, in my right hand the trade figures showing a per screen average of \$1000 in week 1. In my left hand the preview report predicting the biggest hit in the studio's history. Of course I'm prepared to accept ultimate responsibility, but I want YOU to find someone who'll resign.'

Wise to the G-word

James Saynor

Do free-floating creative ideas determine the forms of screen fictions – that is, create genres? Or do commercialised, dictatorial genres mean that writers and directors dance feebly to formula tunes?

The issue used to be one of many bamboozlements at the heart of 'genre criticism'. Other chimerical topics included: do genre works, like Westerns and gangster pictures, reflect audience desires, or just force-tranquillise the viewer with governing ideologies? And do you list works in a particular genre according to their quasi-physical characteristics, to do with settings and the like, or according to their deeper spirits and structures? Was *Star Wars* a Western?

There were no very clear answers to such questions, and as a result much genre criticism seemed to sink into a blancmange of subjectivism. Nowadays, you feel faintly embarrassed even to use the word 'genre'. British film and TV of the past twenty years has in any case tended haughtily to eschew such shortcuts to audience gratification, preferring bespoke confections which, frequently, few people watched, but which the Americans flattered us they cherished. Now, though, money pressures may be forcing both film and television to get wiser to the G-word.

What's left of the film industry is desperate for mainstream material that will play equally well in Perugia and Peoria. And the almost deregulated ITV increasingly resembles a wannabe NBC, dragging the BBC and Channel 4 fitfully in its wake. Accordingly, television drama is likely to become less 'writer-led' and more 'concept-led' as the 90s progress. Today's successors to Dennis Potter and John Byrne might do well to immerse themselves in the old genre criticism, in between boning up on the art of the grabby, one-page synopsis. Meanwhile, the BBC drama department scrambles neurotically to replicate the success of *Inspector Morse*.

It's not the case that British television has been entirely devoid of genres, of course, but more that generic output – whether, say, the post-vaudevillian sitcoms of David ('Allo 'Allo) Croft, or the long lineage of phoney-realist 'costume dramas' – has always been looked down upon by fashion-leaders both inside and outside the industry. They may not have that luxury much longer. As it happens, two recently made showcase drama serials on the BBC and Channel 4 work within familiar genres and try to transform them. As such, they provide a useful spot-check on the current state of the medium's genre awareness and genre dexterity.

Channel 4's five-hour *The Camomile Lawn* is a wartime period drama adapted from a novel by Mary Wesley. It traces the exploits during the Blitz of members of an upper-middle-class English family, each of



'A Fatal Inversion': a country life whodunnit, with a difference

whom has a virulent line in self-obsession. The cast is full of vaguely degenerate 'pretty boy' types, middle-aged grope artists, and roguish 'English roses'. Taking these people wholly on their own terms, the serial is partly a country-house saga, like *Brideshead Revisited*, observing the mid-century fragmentation of propertied relationships. But mostly it's a bizarre celebration of English 'reserve' and stultifying egocentricity. Amid a ronde of mechanistic sexual liaisons, the Dunkirk spirit is revealed as no more than the spirit of individualistic, philistine complacency.

This *Family at War* for the Dickens & Jones classes allows its witless hustlers even less room for psychological manoeuvre than they'd have in a Jeffrey Archer story. Costume drama is noted for the maudlin bourgeois moralising at its centre, but *The Camomile Lawn* sucks that centre out completely, leaving a vacuum of moral abstentionism in which even the sexual abuse of children goes uncensored. (An alternative title for the show could have been *We'll Grope Again*.) The serial is saying, 'Middle-class values are wholly selfish and uncommunitarian – and that's the way I like them', which is certainly a novel way of transforming the costume genre and disarming its habitual critics.

But it's also a recipe for five hours of numbing television. Wesley's book consists mostly of dialogue, and adapter Ken Taylor has limited his contribution to editing down these rapid exchanges. Peter Hall's direction is equally anaemic; and the able cast can only give off a kind of speared winsomeness.

The Camomile Lawn, then, has the outer trappings of nostalgic period drama, but none of its inner, spiritual characteristics. The result is a Polo-mint of mannerism and little else. A new BBC1 series for the spring, by contrast, is more successful at

transforming another familiar genre: the contemporary, country life whodunnit. Indeed, this three-part serial doesn't so much transform the genre as invert it – a strategy reflected in the drama's very title, *A Fatal Inversion*.

We start by knowing the perpetrators of the crime, but don't find out for sure what crime they committed until the end – so, strictly speaking, this is less a 'whodunnit', more a 'what-dun-they'. We identify entirely with the suspects, and the mystery is not how they'll be isolated, but whether they'll be able to elude detection and reconcile themselves to their guilt. And a huge ambiguity surrounds the role of the police: does their pointed deference and play of dunderheadedness conceal a cynical, Columbo-like intelligence, or something far more surprising within our expectations of popular detective fiction?

The Chabrol-like mystery opens with the acute alarm experienced by a pair of thirtysomethings when human remains, buried for a decade, are unearthed in the grounds of a Suffolk mansion. A mosaic of flashbacks to the duo's out-of-kilter salad days, when they lived in the house as students, fills us gradually and grimly in on their former malfeasance. As in many a *Morse*-style whodunnit, the decadence and nihilism at the heart of middle-class (especially 'yuppie') mores is the object of dramatic inquiry, but it's uncovered here with unusual verve and complexity.

The serial is adapted from a novel by Barbara Vine (a.k.a. Ruth Rendell), and if it overreaches itself at one point by referencing Dostoyevsky, dramatist Sandy Welch nevertheless provides a hugely articulate script, healthily independent of the dialogue in the book. She's particularly good at the brittle, manic currents that pass between young people when thrown together in recreational situations – and even has the boldness to tidy up some of Rendell's stragglier plotting towards the climax. At the same time, the direction of Tim Fywell, a relative unknown, is tirelessly inventive as it plumbs the helter-skelter secrets of the characters' lost domain.

One of the most interesting aspects of the old criticism was the way it pointed to genre as a site of negotiation between a free-thinking audience and the industrial machine of Hollywood. As British television turns itself into more of an industrial machine, we can expect a lot more genre dramas, but the critically engaged viewer will need to demand that their content is flexible enough to challenge the limits of formula. The BBC has hardly shown unerring nous when attempting genre in the past (was *Mother Love* a thriller? was *Pulaski* a comedy?), but *A Fatal Inversion* is an encouraging sign. Now all they have to do is repeat the trick in runs of 22. Meanwhile, Channel 4 will have to try a lot harder than *The Camomile Lawn*.

The BBC has hardly shown unerring nous when attempting genre in the past, but 'A Fatal Inversion' is an encouraging sign

A foreign field

Peter Biskind

The recent reincarnation of Orion Classics at Sony Pictures Entertainment (henceforth to be known as Sony Classics) is good news for the American foreign film market, guaranteeing, at least for the moment, the prospects of the pioneering classics distributor. "We're not pioneers, we're survivors", says Sony Classics' Michael Barker, smiling and recalling the number of classics divisions that have bitten the dust in the ten or so years since the concept took hold at a few of the more adventurous majors. At the moment, Sony Classics is flying high, buoyed by the success of Agnieszka Holland's *Europa, Europa*, which at this writing has grossed about \$4.5 million. Barker expects it to hit \$6 million before it goes into home video, against a cost of \$100,000 to acquire, and maybe another \$250,000 to market.

Getting a picture of the health of today's market for foreign films is not easy; it depends on who's talking, what they do, and who they work for. In the long view, going back to the 60s when there was a new Fellini, a Bergman, and two Godards every year, the foreign market is down, both in terms of quality and quantity. But most toilers in the vineyards of movies from abroad prefer to use the early 80s as a benchmark, in which case there is bad news and good news.

The bad news is that even in comparison with the last decade, when the competing classics divisions were flooding the market with foreign product, the number of movies is dramatically down. The good news is that the amount of money in the market has remained about the same, which means that the audience has not diminished. Several players insist that because the marketplace was so hyperventilated by competition among distributors in the early 80s, a lot of movies got distributed that didn't deserve it.

The major changes over the last decade seem to be the rise of American independents, which observers insist has not cut into the foreign film market, and the transformations that have overtaken many of the distributors. Both Barker and Sony Classics' Tom Bernard say that many companies got into foreign films for the wrong reasons: either because these were the only films they could get, or with the ambition of eventually going public and emerging as a mini-major. Bernard points to Island, which began life with *Kiss of the Spider Woman* and *The Trip to Bountiful*, and ended up distributing a Rosanna Arquette film. Analysis Films opened up with *Mephisto* and finished with *Caligula*. "New Line, Miramax, Goldwyn are now in the commercial markets, or exploitation film business", says Bernard. New Line succeeded, he claims, but at the expense of getting out of the business. "They started distributing Godard and Lina Wert-

müller", but now give more attention to *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*.

Bernard claims companies like New Line and Miramax are too big to give speciality films the specialised attention they need. *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* and *High Heels*, both distributed by Miramax, "went out with huge breaks, television advertising, and were gone in three months". By way of contrast, he points to *Camille Claudel*, which went out with forty prints, and took in \$1.6 million in rentals.

Currently, there are two audiences for foreign movies, one for the conventional, old-fashioned epics, with beautiful people in elaborate costumes, like *Jean de Florette*, and another for darker, cutting-edge films like *Delicatessen*. The second are the people, generally younger than the first group, who go to foreign films to see something altogether different from what they get from Hollywood. The only European star with any real following in the US is Gérard Depardieu. Publicist Cara White, of Clein and White, who handles a lot of specialised films, recalls women in Sarasota, Florida, mobbing him on the street for autographs.

The foreign film market is dominated by New York City. "If you fail in New York, it's tough to impossible to make up for it", says White, who says that anything on the Holocaust has a good chance there. Adds Karen Cooper, who runs the prestigious Film Forum, "If you have a heavily Jewish population, you have great sympathy for Israel. I showed *Gaza Ghetto* a few years ago and it didn't do well, but no political films do well now".

Several traditional speciality venues in the city have closed or changed hands over the last few years, including the Cinema Studio on the Upper West Side, where *sex, lies and videotape* premiered, the Paris, and the 68th Street Playhouse where *La Cage aux folles* played for two years. But, says Cooper, "New York is over-screened. I'm sure they'll take foreign films now".

Despite the rise of ancillary markets, the foreign film business is still theatrically driven. Foreign language films (as opposed to British or Australian films in English) are handicapped in the home

'With a cutting-edge film like 'Delicatessen', we invite owners of clubs and downtown restaurants. We market them as mainstream as we can. The trailer has no subtitles'

video markets by virtue of their subtitles.

"One half of our slate is foreign, but there is only one foreign language film, *Volere, Volare*", says Fine Line head Ira Deutschman. "Most of the others are British. There is a market for foreign language films, picking them up for next to nothing and putting them out one after the other in the hope that one of them will hit, like Orion Classics. *Europa, Europa* is doing very well, but the six or seven other films they released this year didn't".

According to Barker, there are two kinds of films that will not play well here: genre films, which includes comedies, gangster films, and sci-fi, for which audiences look to Hollywood, and dubbed films, which they also reject, for reasons that remain a mystery. At today's prices, it costs about \$150,000 to \$200,000 (although some say the figures are closer to \$500,000) to open a foreign film, a sum that includes prints and advertising.

According to White, "Art films are very dependent on word of mouth", which is why they need careful handling. "With a cutting-edge film like *Delicatessen*, we invite owners of clubs and downtown restaurants. We market them as mainstream as we can. The trailer has no subtitles. If they know it's a French film with subtitles, they may not go. We're trying to cross over without alienating our core audience".

"Foreign films are more review sensitive than Hollywood movies", says White. "They don't have the protection of stars. Our job is to try to make the films as review-proof as possible, to generate enough excitement around a film so that its success is not dependent on the *New York Times* review. *My Life as a Dog* got a bad review from the *Times*. Vincent Canby put *Cinema Paradiso* on his Ten Worst list. Both films became enormous hits".

At best, foreign film distribution is a dicey business. The Samuel Goldwyn company did poorly with *Madame Bovary*, for which they reportedly paid about \$1 million, "a lot of money for a French film", says John Pierson, a producer's rep, and grossed about \$2 million. *Black Robe*, on the other hand, did well. Miramax, which was red hot two years ago, has cooled off considerably. Not only did it strike out on Almodóvar's latest, but *The Double Life of Véronique* and Peter Greenaway's *Prospero's Books* both did disappointing business.

"The problem has to do with the films, not the market", says Deutschman. "Where are the new Truffauts? The new Rohmers? The best films are coming from the US, and to a lesser extent England, where the film industry is so troubled that the people scrabbling around at the bottom are coming up with interesting things. The new generation is trying too hard to make international, studio-style cinema. They are desperate to cross over. Those movies do well everywhere but the US. Ultimately, they are fated for failure".



'My Life as a Dog', popular despite bad press

Beyond the mainstream

Berenice Reynaud

Sundance

"Usually, there's at least one snowstorm during the festival", said the guest liaison. This year, though, the sky was clear, the peaks shone in the sun, the snow was powder-white and many guests played hooky to go skiing. At the turn of a mountain road, a faux Swiss village stands in the middle of Mormon territory. But Park City, Utah, a silver mining town converted to tourism twenty-five years ago, had virtually been emptied of Mormons. For ten days, half of Los Angeles – and a few New Yorkers, noticeable because they walked faster than anyone else in this easy-going resort – invaded the cute streets and luxurious condos.

In spite of the geographical proximity of Hollywood, independent cinema is featured at Sundance for other reasons than to provide young film-makers with a calling card to the studios. The most original films were produced in California by people clearly not intent on entering the system. Gregg Araki's *The Living End*, his third feature and first in colour, depicts with Bataille-like excess a tragic and outrageous love story between a macho gigolo and a neurotic film critic who hit the road together when they discover they are both HIV positive. Rico Martinez's *Desperate* is a hilarious post-Warholian account of the efforts of two losers to get their fifteen minutes of fame. Alexander Cassini's *Star Time* takes up a similar theme: his lonely protagonist is a baby-faced schizophrenic killer who commits senseless murders in order to get noticed. Britta Sjogren imaginatively describes in *Jo-Jo at the Gate of Lions* the plight of a young woman caught between the desires of two men and the internal voices that prompt her towards another destiny.

Tom Kalin's debut *Swoon* (like *Poison*, produced in New York by Christine Vachon), shot in a crisp, compelling black and white, is the post-modern retelling of the perverse pact between two society dandies who were secret homosexual lovers in Chicago's roaring 20s (they had already inspired Hitchcock's *Rope*). The fate of the protagonists becomes symptomatic of evils lurking deep in society: homophobia and antisemitism.

Roughly speaking, the documentaries could be divided into three categories. Some were produced for prime-time television, and even film-makers who had otherwise proved their originality seemed constrained by this format. Another group aimed at capturing the real as accurately as possible. The best of this type was Lindsay Law and Joe Berlinger's *Brother's Keeper*; in the *cinéma vérité* tradition of the Maysles brothers, it investigates an apparent miscarriage of justice in an upstate New York rural community, where an illiterate

The most original films were produced in California by people clearly intent on not entering the system



Tom Kalin's *'Swoon'*: a different view of the roaring 20s in Chicago

sixty-year-old farmer was accused of murdering his brother.

The most exciting films, though, questioned the process by which the 'real' is constructed. Trinh T. Minh-ha's *Shoot for the Contents* elegantly scrutinises the subtle network of signs, symbols and images that make up post-Tiananmen Square China. Mixing film and video, documentary footage and staged sequences, Trinh elaborates an intriguing tapestry in which the 'object' (China? the dragon? independent film-making?) is simultaneously lost and found. In *My Crazy Life*, in order to explore the rituals, mores and language of Samoan street gangs in Los Angeles, Jean-Pierre Gorin devises different ways of approaching the Other – scripted narrative elements, reconstructed scenes, gang members interviewing each other for the camera – without moralising or sociological explanation.

With *A Brief History of Time*, shot entirely in the studio, Errol Morris intertwines a humorous, elliptical, yet compassionate approach to the life of Stephen Hawking – the world-renowned physicist crippled by Lou Gehrig's disease – and a visually compelling introduction to his theories about the origins of the universe, 'black holes'

and time. Both Camille Billops' *Finding Christa* and Marco Williams' *In Search of Our Fathers* deconstruct fatherhood and motherhood within the black middle-class family through personal quests – for a daughter given up for adoption years ago, and for a father his son has never met.

Perhaps this is the originality of Sundance: that Morris' million-dollar production and Billops' independent can be presented in the same section – and share the Grand Prize for documentaries.

Tony Rayns

Berlin

As the city itself changes and grows, so the Berlin Festival consolidates its position as the most useful – and user-friendly – of Europe's major festivals. The competition, too obviously in thrall to US interests, is notoriously weak. But Berlin does get first pick of Hollywood's spring releases (*Cape Fear*, *Light Sleeper*, *Bugsy*, Kasdan's lumbering *Grand Canyon* and Woody Allen's *Shadows and Fog*, not all of them set before the jury) and it invariably makes space for one or two rewarding, offbeat movies – like this year's *Ruan Lingyu* by Stanley Kwan,

a moving reflection on the life and times of the finest Shanghai actress of the 30s which has a multi-level structure unique in Hong Kong cinema. And the non-competitive Panorama sidebar has found its own niche as a home for gay cinema, documentaries and 'delinquent' features of various sorts.

The glory of the festival, though, is the Forum of Young Cinema, founded in 1971 to champion all types of 'alternative' cinema that the mainstream finds troubling. Unlike similar events elsewhere, it has kept faith with its original ideals; Ulrich Gregor still trawls the world for signs of unexpected life and comes back with an incomparably cosmopolitan selection. This year's offering included 'Young Japanese Cinema' features, Mexican melodramas and a selection of 'lost' Yiddish features curated and introduced by Jim Hoberman.

Heading the list were two erotic fantasies from newish American directors, both gay-themed and spun off from historical facts. Christopher Münch's *The Hours and Times* imagines what might have happened when Beatles manager Brian Epstein took the young John Lennon to Barcelona for a holiday in the spring of 1963. Münch sees Epstein as a knot of middle-class frustrations, bored with England, seduced by Spain and hopelessly infatuated with Lennon; and Lennon as a smart and questioning working-class kid whose horizons are broadening faster than a stairwell by Gaudí. A delicate, unpretentious formalism pulls together the web of unresolved encounters, cock-teasing and verbal sallies, helped by wonderful performances from David Angus (Epstein) and Ian Hart (Lennon), neither of whom attempts to impersonate his real life prototype.

Tom Kalin's virtuoso debut *Swoon* reads ominously like a 'politically correct' account of the 1924 Leopold-Loeb murder case in Chicago. It is nothing of the sort. Its stance is glamorously queer, but it refracts psychological, sexual, social and political perspectives through each other to produce moments of blinding illumination. Leopold is the intellectual, fixated on Nietzsche; Loeb is the sex object, yielding sexual favours in return for criminal ideas. Kalin plots their progress from petty vandalism and arson to the arbitrary killing of an eight-year-old boy against an agile analysis of the forces that shaped them. Best of all, he deals with their respective sexual fantasies; the film uncovers an orgasmic truth somewhere between the flutter of bird-wings and the sound of a whiplash. Without romanticising or exonerating its protagonists, it puts the joy back into transgression.

Meanwhile, young fogey Aki Kaurismäki is still searching for 'true feelings' at the heart of miserabilist clichés. *La Vie de bohème*, enacted in fractured French by his

The non-competitive Panorama sidebar has found its own niche as a home for gay cinema, documentaries and 'delinquent' features of various sorts

Finnish regulars, is a straight-faced dramatisation of the Henri Murger novel (1851) that sired Puccini's opera. Despite spirited guest appearances (Sam Fuller, Jean-Pierre Léaud and Louis Malle), the one-note joke dies fast.

Happily, Asian directors in the Forum found better things to do than plod around in the detritus of their own cultures. The young Filipino film-maker Raymond Red, with several brilliant shorts to his name, has come up with an intensely visual first feature: *Bayani (Heroes)* subverts some cherished nationalist myths from the anti-Spanish war of independence. The film dreams rings around the troubled life and squalid death of a well-known patriot, finding pre-echoes of the Philippines' current political chaos. And Korean director Chang Sun-Woo's *Kyong-machang Kanungil (The Road to the Racetrack)* tackles the war between men and women as if decades of turgid Freudian analysis had never got in the way. A baffled, immature man's hapless pursuit of his former lover (now a 'different' woman) merges with a portrait of a society in volatile transition, not to mention an approach to narrative that raises indirection to a fine art.

From Germany itself, Cynthia Beatt's *The Party - nature morte* is a confident and superbly realised high-concept fiction: within the framework of an all-night party, it's structured as a flow of vignettes with an ever-changing cast of guests. Thanks to Elfi Mikesch's imperturbable camera and Beatt's own flawless sense of rhythm, it captures milieu, class and emotional climate with terrific precision and hits all the right notes, high and low.



Christopher Münch's, *'The Hours and Times'*

At its centre, the hostess (Tilda Swinton, never more remarkable) vengefully auto-destructs her moribund relationship with her partner by flirting with a handsome stranger. The script awkwardly tries to sidestep psychological banalities by quoting reams of poetry, but the performances and the concept itself are strong enough to surmount this obstacle.

There were many more good things to see in Berlin, including Constantine Gannaris' *Caught Looking* and Gregg Araki's *The Living End* in the Panorama, and Zhang Yuan's *Mama* and Tsukamoto Shinya's *Tetsuo II: Body Hammer* in the Market. Like the films I've discussed, none of these titles fits into the art movie mainstream. Maybe cinema really is changing for the better.



Cynthia Beatt's *'The Party - nature morte'*: Tilda Swinton, never more remarkable

Revelations



An interview with Wim Wenders

By Walter Donohue

● *Until the End of the World*: The year is 1999. On the road to Paris a disillusioned young woman, Claire Tourneur, encounters a mysterious stranger, Trevor McPhee, who is on a dangerous mission for his father. Their brief encounter begins an obsession which takes Claire on a chase around the world. Gradually more people join the chase: the detective Philip Winter, the bounty hunter Burt, the bank robber Chico, and, most importantly, Claire's ex-lover, the novelist Eugene. Soon, no one knows who is following whom. They pursue each other through Europe, via Siberia to Beijing and on to Tokyo, San Francisco, and eventually Australia. There, at the end of the world, Trevor's mission at last finds its goal – to make his blind mother see.

Trevor's real name is Sam Farber. His father has developed a camera that records images that can be transmitted to blind people. At first the Experiment is a failure – Sam is too exhausted to transmit the images to his mother. But Claire manages to do it, and eventually Sam does too. In the euphoria that follows, no one notices the physical and psychological effect which the Experiment is having on Sam's mother. She dies on New Year's Eve, as the others are celebrating the birth of the new century.

With the death of his wife, Sam's father pursues his research with even more obsessive determination, down into the garden of dreams itself. He is joined in this pursuit by Claire and Sam, who very quickly become slaves to their dreams, which the lab's computer has processed from their sleeping brains. They watch their dreams on small hand-monitors: stopping, rewinding, viewing them again and again. They ignore each other and neglect themselves. Eventually, Claire and Sam are rescued from their narcissistic self-destruction and are able to face reality again.

Over the channel

I'm flying to Paris to interview Wim accompanied by the Douglas Brothers – well, one Douglas Brother. Andrew overslept and missed the plane. Stewart is distressed – not because the photography can't be done by just one of them, but because he knows Andrew will be heartbroken because of the great admiration he has for Wenders' work – both as a film-maker and photographer.

Stewart: "He'll get there, even if it's just as I'm packing up the cameras".

Wim's apartment

As fate would have it, when we arrive Wim is rushing out of the door – an urgent appointment that couldn't be cancelled. So when Andrew arrives – as indeed he does – Wim has just returned. Click, snap, snap go the brothers, while I supply the idle chat.

Walter Donohue: I remember years ago when the Cambridge Film Festival showed *'Paris, Texas'* (1984), you said it was a film about a woman. If you look at your last three films – *'Paris, Texas'*, *'Wings of Desire'*

(1987), *'Until the End of the World'* (1991) – the woman becomes more and more central to the film. Is that something you did consciously?

Wim Wenders: Well, you have to consider that the woman's story in *Until the End of the World*, Claire's story, was written right after *Paris, Texas*. It was written before *Wings of Desire*, so it corresponds to a desire I had after *Paris, Texas* to write a film with a woman at its centre.

At the end of *Paris, Texas* Travis disappears, and the male point of view, so to speak, disappears with him, leaving the woman and her little son. That scene when Nastassja Kinski takes Hunter into her arms really felt for me as if a whole load of restrictions had been overcome, and from that moment on I could look at a film differently, look at a film with a female point





of view, or look at a film that would have many different characters. It was the start of a new basis for working.

So it was two weeks after *Paris, Texas* was first screened at Cannes that Solveig (Donmartin) and I started to write the story. At that time it had the working title *Solveig Travels* – not so much because it's Solveig's name, but more as an ironic nod towards *Peer Gynt*, which is also a story about a traveller, but the traveller is a man and the woman who loves him stays at home and waits for him. Our idea was to turn the story around and have Solveig follow the man instead of waiting.

It took a long time to get this love story/road movie off the ground. After three years I had to do something to keep myself and my company,

Road Movies, alive, so we took a break for about a year and did *Wings of Desire*.

But is '*Wings of Desire*' also related to this feeling that you wanted to do a film that would have as its basis a different point of view?

Yes. There are interconnections between the two projects because one was made in the middle of the other. And then afterwards, *Until the End of the World* was influenced in turn by *Wings of Desire*. For example, the dream elements in *Until the End of the World* were strongly influenced by *Wings of Desire*; the fact that the angels were able to hear people's thoughts led to the idea of the scientist who is able to see people's thoughts. Similarly, the multitude of characters we had created for *Until the End of the World* also influenced the cast and story of

Solveig travels: Claire Tournéur (Solveig Donmartin) at the beginning of an obsessive chase that takes her around the world

Wings of Desire. It's hard to say which film has borrowed from the other – it goes both ways.

Then there are the two diary-movies, *Tokyo-Ga* (1985) and *Notebook on Cities and Clothes* (1989), which belong to the same context and also influenced *Until the End of the World*. *Notebook* made me more open to the idea of using electronic images.

Of course, '*Notebook*' is largely about Yohji Yamamoto, who was then involved with '*Until the End of the World*'.

Yes. He designed almost all William Hurt's clothes, and some of Solveig's too.

What about '*Tokyo-Ga*'? How does that relate? ►

◀ Ozu's actor, Chishu Ryu, is in both films.

It seems to me that when Chishu Ryu enters the film, a kind of calmness enters with him.

Japan was the pivotal point in the film from the very beginning. Or to be more precise, it's when the two characters move away from Tokyo into the mountains, into the quiet landscape surrounding the ryokan. The only quiet moment in the whole first half is this moment in the mountains.

As soon as they leave the mountains and travel to San Francisco it gets hectic – in fact, it gets quite violent. But from there they move out into the great Australian desert. Doesn't this present a problem of rhythm? That the sequence in Australia will seem too much of a break with what has gone before?

The progression is completely natural. When I first encountered the Australian landscape, which the Aboriginal peoples have been inhabiting for over 40,000 years, it was after a journey that had led me from Europe, all through America, to south-east Asia, Japan, Hong Kong, Seoul, Bangkok and Indonesia. I hadn't even intended to go to Australia. It was only by chance that when I was in Bali I bought a book called *A Town Called Alice* in a second-hand bookshop. I became fascinated by this little town in the middle of nowhere, so although I had already decided that my trip was over, I took a plane to Darwin in December, which is about the hottest time there. Then I rented a car and drove out into the desert.

I drove for a week into this completely empty, giant space. When I got to Ayres Rock I was the only person there. I walked around it, climbed on top of it, and didn't meet a single person. It was a complete shock. Previously on my journey I had always kept moving; I would stay three or four days in a city, but always moving. And all of a sudden, coming to Australia, this ancient landscape and its people changed my pace and I came to a blinding stop.

Out of this experience I wrote a science fiction story in 1977. This was then combined with the love story/road movie that Solveig and I wrote in 1984. The story changes gears with the arrival in Australia, but it shouldn't feel like a break from what has gone before. For me it has always been a completely natural progression – this arrival from a chaotic, almost comic-strip world into that other dimension which is the Australian desert.

How did you cope with the need to have Aboriginal characters in the film? For instance, when John Boorman did 'The Emerald Forest' (1985) he made a conscious decision not to use real Indians in order not to disrupt their way of life.

The lives of the Aboriginal peoples had been thoroughly disturbed over a hundred years ago. In fact, the group we worked with had been living in Alice Springs but had moved back to their ancestors' country and were living in a little area called Utopia.

We made sure that they could live in their own ways when they came to work with us. We also discussed the film at length with them, explained the story. This wasn't all that easy since they have no real notion of fiction. They have no notion of future tense either, they just

don't have the grammar for it. However, in the end they did rather well and made some important contributions.

Such as?

Well, the healing process that the William Hurt character goes through to rid himself of his addiction was their suggestion. When I told them that part of the story, they said, "Oh, these two troubled people, we can help them. If someone is out of himself, we know how to put him back into himself. We would have him sleep between two old men who are strong enough to cope with his dream". So that's what we did.

The journey must have been as incredible for the crew as it was for the characters in the story. I've always thought it remarkable that you are able to shoot your films in continuity.

Shooting out of continuity doesn't even occur to anyone working in any related form. I don't know a writer who would write the ending of a book first. It seems to me that the very nature of a story is that it starts at the beginning and ends at the end. The magic of the story is that it goes through a certain form; it finds its centre, its destination, and it tries to get there. But if you shoot out of continuity you never really 'live' the necessity of getting to this point – except, of course, in the writing process. But that process doesn't count much when you shoot. Of course, it's important to have a script and to have gone through the writing process – but when you shoot you have to have your eyes open, so your eyes can't be on the script because then you don't see anything any more. If you shoot in continuity, you are always living in the present of your stories; you are shooting in the present tense. Whereas if you shoot out of continuity, one day you are shooting in the past tense, and the next day in the future.

Given the way you work, it seems that the ideal situation would be for you to begin shooting with only two-thirds of the script written and the ending kept open. It's interesting that the script of 'Until the End of the World' did have an ending, in San Francisco, which you shot when you were there half way through the shooting. But when the film finished eight weeks later in Australia, the end didn't fit.

We had no way of living the experience that could have led to that scene we shot in San Francisco, so the end we shot was a formula ending. I would have loved to have kept the

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would go blind

ending open, but you can't do it on a film with that sort of budget – a science fiction film where everything has to be designed – it's just not fair to the production department. I think everyone knew that there would be a different ending, but something had to be there to convince the producers, distributors, banks, completion guarantors that the film was complete. They would be scared shitless if they read a script without an ending.

Why did you finally end the film in Space? Did you feel that the character of Claire had, in a sense, experienced so much on earth that all she could do was move into another dimension?

Perhaps it was a bit ironic, but I felt that because she had come out of the other side of this disease, this addiction to her dream images, she was able to have a fresh look at things, and in order to do that she needed some distance.

And then I realised that whenever I was troubled as a child – if I felt that I was at a dead end, or had experienced some grief, or there was some overwhelming problem – I had a technique whereby I would try to imagine myself, perhaps in a religious sense, from above. As if God were watching me. That's also the point of view of the story-teller – from above. Now Claire has a lot of problems, and when I tried to figure out the ending, I thought of this childish thing – that she takes the largest distance possible. Of course, it's really funny that she takes it so literally.

This whole idea occurred when we did the shot of Claire and Eugene on the wharf in Darwin – just sitting there – and that was a possible last image. We wanted to have a boat, otherwise nobody would know it was a harbour, so we sat there waiting for an hour and eventually a big cargo ship came in and its name was *Cosmos Venture*. I thought if there was ever a hint about the way this should go, then...

Also, the idea that it would be some sort of observatory for Green Space related to some of the subjects of the film; related to 'seeing', to the damage done to the planet that we had witnessed during the course of the film. So it seemed that it pulled things together.

Brasserie

Snap, click, click. The cameras are packed up and the brothers go off to the airport. I can't wait to see what they've seen of Wim – or what he's allowed them to see. Wim and I, in turn, slope off to a brasserie by the Max Linder cinema, where Wim is appearing for the next four nights after the evening performance of *Until the End of the World* to answer questions from the audience.

Can you say something about the Max Linder cinema? It's a courageous example of a modern cinema because it has created a unique standard of picture and sound quality. It was the first cinema to have digital sound. They give films long runs – European films. These days we need to defend European cinema, and also to defend the theatres who defend it. One of the major problems our European films are facing today is that they don't get distribution. Also, very often



In the middle of life: the narcissistic lovers Claire and Sam (William Hurt), who become addicted to repeatedly viewing their own dreams, top; Claire, at the beginning of the journey's end, in the Australian desert, above

nowadays European films, or smaller films, are released only on tiny screens, and people can't really appreciate a film in those conditions. These films are pushed into a corner, and, eventually, get pushed out completely. So I think the fact that the Max Linder has such a fantastic screen and sound system, and insists on a programme of European films, is really showing the way.

In Berlin, during the European film awards, David Puttnam said that 'Toto le Héro' and 'Delicatessen' are the kind of films that Europe should be making

because of the imagination and energy of those films. But how do you make that happen?

If there was a recipe, everyone would do it – but there isn't. If you look at those two films you realise that films which take risks, that not only have a good story but a poignant and conscious language, will create an audience. *Delicatessen* played for months and months at the Max Linder and became a cult film. It was directed by two young guys who had done marvellous things on video and managed to translate that language on to film in a way that doesn't make it seem like a video clip.

But isn't there a problem because of how easy it is to impress an audience with images in a film?

Obviously the big danger today is that the cinema, in general, is moving towards a growing

affinity with the language of commercials: to impress with images instead of telling a story. And that's why *Delicatessen* and *Toto* are successful – they do impress with their images, but they also have a story. You have to have that combination.

'Until the End of the World' is very much about the danger inherent in images.

What interested me most in making a film that took place in the future was: what would happen to the visual culture that surrounds us? At first I tried to think about what it was that was so good about our visual culture. I tried to think of something positive, something Utopian. And then I remembered that as a kid I had always dreamt about a machine that could make a blind person see. I lived very closely with my blind aunt and the question of blindness very much preoccupied me when I was a boy. So, Utopia would be a blind person seeing.

This is obviously a science fiction idea as it is just not possible in the near future – we can transplant all sorts of things, but never an eye, we could never connect the optic nerve. So we thought of different approaches and came up with this idea of sending an electronic image into the visual cortex with the help of a computer which would have learnt to decipher brain information to find out what creates the images inside the brain of a seeing person, and then re-create those images inside the brain of a blind person. For a long time, that was the aim of the movie; for a long time that was the end of the movie.

The blind character 'saw'.

And then everything was wonderful. But then we slowly came to the realisation that if you could do that, it would also work the other way round. All of a sudden what was a positive Utopia became a negative one.

What do you mean: the other way round?

Pulling images out of someone's brain, rather than putting them in – images, memories, dreams. So much had happened since I first had the idea for the film, the realm of images had exploded, so it was really necessary to show both Utopia and Dystopia. Slowly the story shaped itself into one in which the blind would die from the gift of seeing and the seeing would then go blind – looking at their dreams would be such an experience for Claire and Sam that their relationship could not survive it. Seeing your own dreams is an act of narcissism, but more interiorised, and more tricky. Looking into a mirror and falling in love with your own image is one thing, but seeing your own dreams and feeding on them would create such a chemical disorder in your brain that it would reduce the characters to addicts.

And how do you get cured of this addiction?

I think love can overcome that loss of reality. But as both Claire and Sam were victims of the disease, they couldn't help each other.

Didn't the fact that they both fell prey to the addiction indicate that it wasn't really love, but rather obsessiveness that held them together?

This, of course is something you can never be sure of. There's a certain obsessiveness in every love, in every act of falling in love, because ►

◀ falling in love is also a sort of sickness; in love we lose ourselves and our sense of reality. It is also linked to a certain kind of narcissism, because sometimes you realise that what you had fallen in love with was yourself and not the Other. That's what *Paris, Texas* talks about, that's what Travis realises. He leaves in the end because he realises that he has never really 'seen' the Other, rather he was infatuated with the Other.

The love that cures Claire belongs to Eugene and is expressed by him typing out the story of the great journey that Claire has undergone.

Yes. Eugene is a selfless person and the most Utopian character in the script, in as much as he is able to live with his loss and his jealousy, and the end of their relationship, without possessiveness or bitterness. He is the only one who can help her, but as he is not a psychoanalyst he can only do it through his own means, through his craft – which is writing.

To read and listen to your own story is a different thing than looking at your own image. Claire's sickness is a loss of reality induced through images, induced through her own dream images. So I thought that reading her own story would restore her sense of reality to her. Writing creates a distance on the one hand, but on the other it creates connectedness – and it was Eugene's job to re-connect her. I realise too, in a more general way, that words and stories connect better – or still connect in the same way as they always did – and that images more and more disconnect us.

Filmography

Wim Wenders

born 14 August 1945, Düsseldorf

Schauplätze 10 mins (1967)

Producer/Screenplay/Director of Photography/Editor

Same Player Shoots Again

12 mins (1968)

p/sc/ph/ed

Silver City 25 mins (1969)

p/sc/ph/ed

Alabama: 2000 Light Years

22 mins (1969)

sc/ed

3 Amerikanische LP's

(3 American LP's) 15 mins (1969)

ph/ed

Polizeifilm

12 mins (1970)

sc/ph/ed

Summer in the City

125 mins (1970)

sc

Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter (The Goalkeeper's Fear of the Penalty) 101 mins (1971)

sc

"Actually, what interested me in the book wasn't so much the 'Handke' part of it as the writing: the way things were described, the way it moved from one sentence to the next. You suddenly felt completely hooked, because each sentence was so good on its own, the sequence of sentences suddenly seemed much more engrossing than the action and the question what, if anything, will happen next. I loved that about the book. How each sentence flows from the one before. That precision is what gave me

I have a vague memory that in the last section of 'The State of Things' (1982), Gordon, the producer, and Friedrich, the director, talk about stories.

Yes. For Gordon stories are like walls, and Friedrich was trying to build a house without walls. Now that ten years have passed, I think that Gordon was so much ahead of Friedrich, who dreams of his images and a story-free movie but who, in a way, completely missed the plot.

He was on the wrong track.

Of course, in *The State of Things* this was all connected to a different set of problems. But somehow, with hindsight, it seems to me that Gordon was representing a point of view of film-making that was much more visionary. Of course, Gordon is talking from a classical American producer point of view, where the first thing you need is a good story. But right now it seems to me that story-telling, especially in American films, is a lost art. What has taken over is pretending to tell stories, taking recipes for stories, formulas. A formula story is also an anti-story because it's completely hollow. In a story you have something to say, but in a formula you have nothing to say, you are repeating. So the classic approach to film-making – where you have a story – could be seen today as a necessary, new approach.

Gordon would be very happy about 'Until the End of the World' because it has lots of stories.

Gordon might have financed it!

But he had no money.

That was his problem. That's why he got killed.

the idea of making a film, and of making it in a similar way too, using images in sequence, like Handke uses his sentences, images with the same truthfulness and precision. That's what made the film so expensive to make, because achieving that sort of precision takes a great deal of trouble, making our images reminiscent of certain types of shot that you see a lot in American films, for instance, or using a particular kind of light that is difficult to produce. Because the images will 'click' only when you have that exact quality of light, which is quite tricky to create".

Der scharlachrote Buchstabe (The Scarlet Letter)

90 mins (1972)

co-sc

"Every film is also a documentary of itself and the way it was made. For me, 'The

Scarlet Letter' documents conditions under which I wouldn't care to work again: I don't ever want to make another film in which a car or a petrol station or a television set or a phone booth aren't allowed to appear.

"This sounds emotive, but emotion is what it's about: emotion is only possible in films which haven't been subjected to restrictive conditions, and which don't subject the things in them to such conditions either, whether it's the actors, or the sky overhead, or a dog trotting past in the back of the shot. That said, the children in 'The Scarlet Letter' contradict everything I've written here. They're as natural as they are in a science fiction film".

Alice in den Städten (Alice in the Cities) 110 mins (1974)

Aus der Familie der Panzereichen



The American Friend

There's a certain obsessiveness in every love, because falling in love is also a sort of sickness; we lose ourselves and our sense of reality

How would you justify all the stories in 'Until the End of the World'?

The stories in our film were not based on other stories. Solveig and I invented them. Of course, the film is overflowing with stories, but it was written, so to speak, from the heart. It was certainly not a formula or recipe. There is no other movie like this. There was an abundance of stories and a willingness to tell them all – if possible. *Until the End of the World* is just overcooking with story.

So what is the difference between the story someone will get when they see the two and a half hour version in the US and the one they will get in the three hour European version, or the eventual five hour version?

I think the story has still remained intact in the American cut. I am very positive about

Die Insel (From The Crocodile Family, The Island) from TV series 'Ein Haus für Uns' (A House for Us) 50 mins (1974)

Falsche Bewegung (Wrong Movement) 103 mins (1975)

Im Lauf der Zeit (Kings of the Road) 176 mins (1976)

p/sc

"The film is the story of two men, but it doesn't take a Hollywood approach to the subject. American films about men – especially recent ones – are exercises in suppression: the men's true relationships with women, or with each other, are displaced by story, action and the need to entertain. They leave out the real nub: why the men prefer to be together, why they get on with each other, why they don't get on with women, or, if they do, then only as a pastime. My film is about precisely that: two men getting on together, each preferring the other's company to that of a woman. You get to see the shortcomings of both of them, their emotional insecurity; you see them trying to be mutually supportive and to hide their faults, and when they know each other well enough they begin discussing them. As a consequence of that, they split up. They split up because, on their journey across Germany, they've suddenly grown too close. It's a story that you're not often told in films about men. The story of the absence of women, which is at the same time the story of the longing for their presence!"

Der Amerikanische Freund (The American Friend) 123 mins (1977)

sc

"I've always had a problem with bad guys. Maybe it's my handicap. It's hard for me

that. It is more that the volume has been brought down.

If the story could have been told in that two and a half hour time scale, then why would you want to do a five hour version?

Because the five hour version does more justice to our original story and all the people who had agreed to work on that original story – the actors, the technicians. They did the abundant story and, for strictly market reasons, we had to reduce it. I felt that for once there was a reason for the abundant story to be shown and told.

When you reduce a story you can keep the plot alive, but some of the colours, some of the nuances get lost. The more you have to streamline, the more things drop out that are not necessary. But sometimes the things that are not necessary are the things that are most felt and most alive. Many of the minor characters suffered from cutting the story down because they were not immediately necessary to it. A lot of the humour and music was lost.

What's that can of film sitting next to you?

It's the last reel of *Fahrenheit 451* (François Truffaut, 1966). I'm going to show it during the discussion tonight.

How does 'Fahrenheit 451' relate to 'Until the End of the World'?

First of all, it's also a science fiction film. Second, whereas *Until the End of the World* is about the future of images, *Fahrenheit 451* is a film set in the future about books. In terms of the storyline, in *Fahrenheit* books become evil, and in our film it is images. Also, somehow I always

thought the endings were related: in our film Eugene tells Claire her story and that cures her; in *Fahrenheit*, because books are burnt and forbidden, these people take off into the wilderness and live as outcasts, and because they can't have books, each of them learns one book by heart and becomes the book. Then there is this incredible last sequence where all these people walk by the camera and everybody is reciting a book in his own language. It's an analogy that doesn't quite fit, but emotionally it has always meant a lot to me.

I'm doing a book at the moment where part of it has a questionnaire where I've asked various directors what they would do if they didn't have the normal restrictions: when you're making a film you never have enough time, you never have enough money. So what kind of film would you make if you had all the money you needed, and all the time?

I think it would be a nightmare.

Why?

To have all the time and all the money without restrictions would make film-making impossible. Restrictions are necessary; at least, I couldn't work without restrictions. If you tell me that I can shoot forever and without restrictions, I could never finish a movie. If I had all the money I wanted and all the time I wanted I would be unable to shoot.

But look at 'Until the End of the World'. The end of the film was originally supposed to occur in Africa, and that got cut out because of the budget. If you hadn't had that kind of restriction, you would have gone to Africa to finish it.

Yes. But we would not only have gone to Africa, we would have gone to Iceland, we would have gone to Brazil, we would have gone to Spain, we would have really shot in China, and we would still be shooting.

So you think limitations are a good thing?

Limitations are not only a good thing, they are a necessity.

What could you say to end this?

Amen. I don't know.

What do you feel is the most important thing that anyone seeing the film should take away from it, whatever version they see or however many times they happen to see it?

I would wish that people would come out of the film with a sharpened sense of the way they are dealing with images.

That they think a bit more about the implications of this image culture we live in.

Yes, that's right.

It was getting late. We left the brasserie and walked down the boulevard opposite the Max Linder. Since Wim possesses one of the most recognisable faces in Paris, he was instantly spotted by a group of guys outside the cinema. Succumbing to their enthusiasm, he allowed himself to be photographed with them. Then, extricating himself, he walked with me towards the Métro stop before taking a quiet walk to prepare himself for the session at the Max Linder. As I walked down the stairs to the Métro I looked back. I saw him disappearing down the side street, clutching the can of film, trailing a cloud of smoke behind him.

to conceive of characters I don't like.

When I did 'The American Friend' I ended up casting several directors in parts as gangsters because they were the only gangsters I knew. [laughs] On the other hand, the bad guy, Dennis Hopper's character, ended up being my favourite".

Lightning Over Water (a.k.a. **Nick's Movie**) 91 mins (1979)

co-d/co-sc/co-ed

Quand je m'éveille (Reverse Angle)

17 mins (1982)

sc/ph

Der Stand der Dinge (The State of Things) 127 mins (1982)

co-sc

"The most surprising thing about the film is when it transfers to Hollywood, at a point where the story is very insubstantial, a finger of a story, and it suddenly gains an arm. All I had to do was follow the story. This has a lot to do with Hollywood and the fact that we're in a city rather than on a beach, and there are cars and movement. The film just took off and left theories behind".

Hammett 94 mins (1983)

Chambre 666 (Room 666)

21 mins (1984)

Paris, Texas 150 mins (1984)

co-sc

"I didn't look at a single film, picture or painting for 'Paris, Texas', whereas we looked at Walker Evans before doing 'Kings of the Road' and Edward Hopper before doing 'American Friend'. I didn't have one book with me, which is rare. We didn't even try to make little drawings the night before the shooting.

"A lot of my films start off with roadmaps instead of scripts. Sometimes it feels like flying blind without



The State of Things



Paris, Texas

instruments. You fly all night and in the morning you arrive somewhere. That is: you have to try to make a landing somewhere so the film can end.

"For me, this film has come off better than, or differently to, my previous films. Once more, we flew all night without instruments, but this time we landed exactly where we meant to. From the outset, 'Paris, Texas' had a much straighter trajectory and a much more precise destination. And from the beginning, too, it had more of a story than my earlier films, and I wanted to tell that story till I dropped".

Tokyo-Ga 93 mins (1985)

sc/ed

"If our century still had any shrines... if there were any relics of the cinema, then for me it would have to be the corpus of the Japanese director Yasujiro Ozu. He made fifty-four films in all, silents in the 20s, black and white films in the 30s and 40s, and finally colour films until his death in 1963 – on 12 December, his sixtieth birthday.

"Ozu's films always tell the same simple stories, of the same people, in the same city of Tokyo. They are told with extreme economy, reduced to their barest essentials. They show how life has changed in Japan over forty years. Ozu's films show the slow decline of the Japanese family and the collapse of national identity. They don't do it by pointing aghast at the new, American, occidental influences, but by lamenting the losses with a gentle melancholy as they occur.

"His films may be thoroughly Japanese, but they are also absolutely universal. I have seen all the families in

the world in them, including my parents, my brother and myself. Never before or since has the cinema been so close to its true purpose: to give an image of man in the twentieth century, a true, valid and useful image, in which he can not only recognise himself, but from which he can learn as well".

Himmel über Berlin (Wings of Desire) 128 mins (1987)

p/sc

"The thing I wished for and saw flashing was a film *in and about Berlin*. A film that might convey something of the history of the city since 1945. A film that might succeed in capturing what I miss in so many films that are set here, something that seems to be so palpably there when you arrive in Berlin: a feeling in the air and under your feet and in people's faces, that makes life in this city so different from life in other cities.

"To explain and clarify my wish, I should add: it's the desire of someone who's been away from Germany for a long time, and who could only ever experience 'Germanness' in this one city. I should say I'm no Berliner. Who is nowadays? But for over twenty years now, visits to this city have given me my only genuine experiences of Germany, because the (hi)story that elsewhere in the country is suppressed or denied is physically and emotionally present here".

Auszeichnungen zu Kleidern und Städten (Notebook on Cities and Clothes) 81 mins (1989)

sc

Bis ans Ende der Welt (Until the End of the World) 179 mins (1991)

co-sc

For Martin Scorsese, femininity is two-faced, both suffering passivity and destructive power, argues Pam Cook, as she reflects on the critics' responses to 'Cape Fear', with its disturbing gender juggling



Scorsese's masquerade

● A deafening silence surrounds the sexual politics of Scorsese's *Cape Fear*. Here we have – in a year which has already seen two widely publicised rape trials in the US – a violent rape movie in which women apparently collude in their own punishment at the hands of a rapist. Yet for the most part critics, even when shocked by the film's brutality, prefer to discuss it in formal and/or moral terms – as 'cinema' or as a treatise on good and evil. Feminists too have been conspicuously quiet. This is not the first occasion on which Scorsese has thrown down a gauntlet to the women's movement. The challenge, it seems, has worn thin.

In the face of this general reticence, some male commentators have shown a willingness to speak up on behalf of oppressed womankind. For instance, Jeremy Campbell, the Washington correspondent of the *Evening Standard*, opened his vitriolic review with a poignant anecdote: "At one particularly horrible moment in... *Cape Fear*, a woman in the

audience put her hand to her face and half sobbed: 'Oh, no!' I like to think the woman was protesting, not just at the scene, a sexual assault on a little girl, but at the appalling realisation that here were we, supposedly civilised adults, paying to see what the most debauched and degenerate Roman emperors might have gagged over".

Again in the *Standard*, in one of the few reviews explicitly to take account of sexual politics, Alexander Walker wrote: "Feminists will squirm as, under the convict's smiling provocation, she [Lori Davis] proceeds to act out every seductive wile and wink that a promiscuous woman can invent. She certainly 'asks for it' – though not, of course, in the form in which it soon comes".

Such gallantry is surprising when it is considered that almost everybody is victimised in *Cape Fear*. A quick body count reveals that, of those who are assaulted, threatened, raped or killed, six (including Cady) are male, four

female and one canine, while of the final survivors, two are female and one male. Yet, against all the evidence, this espousal of the female cause by the critics quoted above designates women as the natural and obvious victims of Scorsese's movie. These male writers seem to be motivated by a desire to exorcise their own feelings of victimisation, to put them where they belong, with the 'weaker sex'. That such defensive action should be necessary suggests that *Cape Fear* indulges in some disturbing gender bending.

It's no secret that, in a bid for commercial success, Scorsese decided to remake J. Lee Thompson's taut black and white thriller as a horror movie. The end result is no arty, upmarket revamp. For, despite its \$30 million dollar budget, *Cape Fear* owes everything to low-budget horror movies – Abel Ferrara's 1987 *Ms 45* (*Angel of Vengeance*), for instance. It is a rape revenge movie in reverse, with an avenging hero instead of heroine. This is a genre in

which psycho-sexual anxieties, the coupling of sexual desire with aggression and the playing out of sado-masochistic power relationships are the narrative mainspring. A contract exists between film-makers and spectators in which the former undertake to 'do over' the latter; to frighten them, precisely, out of their wits. The audience for 'low' horror is one that pays to be hurt, to be assaulted in much the same way as the film's characters. This experience is about arousing the viewer's base instincts – it has nothing whatever to do with the 'uplifting' or purifying qualities of 'high' art.

Scorsese has taken this remit seriously. We cringe as the camera is used like a battering ram, lunging at the actors, glancing off De Niro's chin, or burying itself in Nick Nolte's abdomen, while the pounding soundtrack hammers away at the auditory nerves. We suffer exquisite torture as we wait with bated breath for Max Cady to penetrate the primitive defences of the Bowden house. We scream in terror when Cady leaps from the shadows to garotte private investigator Kersek, and our stomachs lurch in disgust at the sight of Sam Bowden slipping and sliding around in a pool of Kersek's thickening blood. Thus Scorsese makes masochists of us all.

Cinematic masochism offers a host of guilty pleasures, not confined to the terror tactics of the horror film, but nevertheless played out there in particularly blatant form. The suffering of the characters mirrors our own humiliation as we wait – literally 'held in suspense' – to discover their fate. We shift anxiously in our seats as we are drawn into games of disguise and pursuit which postpone the final resolution. And we revel squeamishly in scenes of ritualistic punishment and death. Scorsese, of course, has already proved himself a master of the masochistic aesthetic, in *Raging Bull*, for example, and most elaborately in *The Last Temptation of Christ*. In *Cape Fear* it is no longer subtext, but overt message.

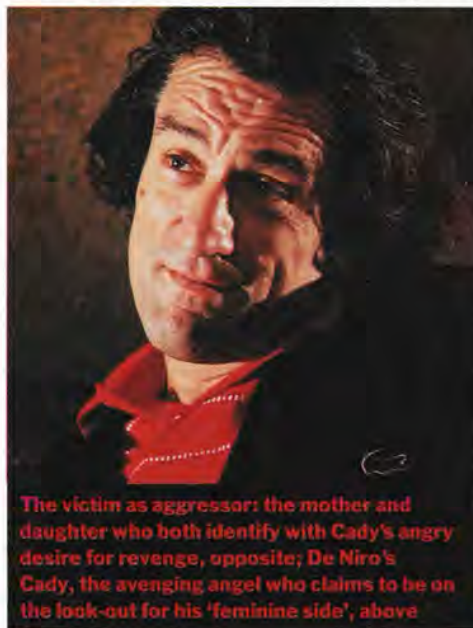
It is well known that Freud thought that masochism was essentially 'feminine'. Fantasies of being beaten, violated and defiled, while common to both sexes, were 'natural' to women but signified 'perversion' (a receptive homosexuality) in men. Horror film-makers would seem to agree. Abject fear is coded as feminine as, in movie after movie, female victims with terrified expressions – wide eyes and gaping mouths – are stalked with evil intent by male aggressors. Yet, as Carol Clover argues in her provocative forthcoming book, *Men, Women and Chain Saws* (Princeton University Press), this is certainly not the whole story. Horror movies can also be characterised by role reversals in which victims turn the tables on their aggressors. Here, the slasher/rapist, frequently a sexually impaired figure, usually ends up slashed, maimed or killed, often by an axe- or knife-wielding heroine. The female victim-turned-avenger takes on the aggressor role and is thereby 'masculinised', while the slasher/rapist becomes the victim and meets as nasty an end as any masochist could wish for. While victimisation is still regarded as an essentially 'femi-

nine' state, men – at least as often as women – find themselves in it.

Horror's gender disturbances are given several more turns of the screw by Scorsese. From the beginning, his rapist is designated as a victim. Max Cady is victimised by a corrupt legal system which sends him to prison for fourteen years on manipulated evidence. Not only is he sodomised in jail, but he loses his home and family as well. As he tells Sam Bowden, the lawyer whose actions put him away, he is now "looking for his feminine side" – a bizarre assertion coming from a violent underclass ex-con, but entirely logical in the film's terms. Cady's sense of loss links him with the women characters, all of them 'done over' in some way by Bowden, whose resemblance to Cady the dialogue repeatedly stresses.

Cady's savage sexual (and vampiric) assault on Sam Bowden's mistress, Lori Davis, is both a mirror for Bowden's carelessly cruel treatment of her and, as her refusal to testify makes explicit, an indictment of the legal system which would heap further humiliation on her – as, indeed, it does on Cady, who is subsequently arrested on a trumped-up charge and submitted to a full body search because Bowden suspects him of intending to rape his wife, Leigh. In the vertiginous final sequence, Cady does rape Leigh, but not before she has pleaded with him not to attack her daughter Danielle in a speech which emphasises their common experience of loss (his years in prison, her years of marriage). Cady's feminine side scandalously surfaces in the brief instant in which, dressed in the clothes of the Bowden family's maid, Graciella, he garottes Kersek in their kitchen. This scene has been much discussed as an obligatory, and therefore easily dismissable, reference to Hitchcock's *Psycho*. Yet De Niro's drag, in the class, ethnic and gender connections it makes between Cady and Graciella, is surely more than this.

Cape Fear's complex pattern of refracted images makes it plain that avenging angel Cady is acting on behalf of victimised women. In this light, the female characters' apparent



The victim as aggressor: the mother and daughter who both identify with Cady's angry desire for revenge, opposite; De Niro's Cady, the avenging angel who claims to be on the look-out for his 'feminine side', above

collusion in their own humiliation – the fact that they are attracted to the rapist – takes on a different hue. They could be said to be drawn, not only to his violent sexuality, but to the distorted picture he reflects back at them of their own rage and pain, and of their desire for revenge. Scorsese's most controversial move in this respect is to bracket the main action with the narrative voice of Danielle telling the audience that the film is her reminiscence. This ruse shifts the bases considerably. If Cady is conjured up by Danielle, then the threat to the American family comes, not from an intruder, but from within. Problem child Danielle calls up Cady as a defence against her incestuous desire for Sam, and as a wish to find an escape route out of the claustrophobic confines of the Bowden family nexus.

Even more disquieting than the idea that the movie represents a teenage girl's fantasy is the notion that Scorsese, in the time-honoured tradition of story-telling, uses one of his characters as a mask for his own violent sexual fantasies, which include the seduction and rape of a fifteen-year-old girl. But what exactly is going on in this masquerade? Without speculating about his desire for a sexual awakening at the hands of De Niro's Cady, the director's delegation of the narrator's role to Danielle suggests at the very least strong feelings of affinity with this most receptive, most susceptible, of all the film's characters. An attempt by Scorsese to recover his lost innocence, perhaps?

Except that Danielle is far from innocent. She is the one who forms an alliance with Cady and, in a sense, 'employs' him to violate her mother and destroy her father. She is the one who sets fire to Cady in the final sequence and, as the narrator, sees to it that he is devoured by that familiar feminine trope, the swirling black vortex of Cape Fear river. (Indeed, the infamous scene in which Danielle and Cady meet in the school theatre, when he probes her mouth with his finger, can be read as a threat as much to him as to her – an intimation of his eventual 'swallowing up'.) And, of course, in the film's closing moments, it is Danielle's voice that reminds us that, through her dreams, she can raise Cady from the dead.

It would seem, then, that for Scorsese femininity is two-faced, embodying both suffering passivity and monstrous destructive power. Horror's bisexual games enable him to confront us with some unpalatable truths – that there is a victim, and aggressor, in all of us, for example. But in spite of all the gender juggling, Scorsese still adheres to a negative notion of the feminine. The real horror in *Cape Fear* is feminisation: the contamination of positive 'masculine' values (heroism, integrity, honour and so forth) by 'feminine' values of weakness, prevarication and moral laxity, typified by the ambivalent figure of anti-hero Sam Bowden. Scorsese has produced his most overtly femino-phobic movie. We can hardly admire him for that. At the most, we can thank him for laying on the line with blistering clarity the way our culture devalues femininity as an alibi for male fears and desires.

There never was a simpler, happier family until the coming of Peter Pan.

J. M. Barrie, 'Peter Pan', 1911

● In the late 80s, just as Wall Street crashed again and the present recession began to take hold, Hollywood's biological clock exploded. In an economic climate reminiscent of the 30s, when Shirley Temple rose to fame, audiences could once more count their blessings by paying their dues to see the smiling faces of babies on screen. *Baby Boom*, *Three Men and a Baby*, *Look Who's Talking* and *Parenthood* were swiftly delivered and proud directors and producers beamed as their films toddled to the top of the box office charts.

This collection spawned two commercially successful sequels – *Look Who's Talking Too* and *Three Men and a Little Lady* – and marked the beginning of a new phase. With the John Hughes-produced *Home Alone* – claimed to be the biggest grossing comedy ever – and the freak success of *Problem Child*, children moved with a vengeance into the big picture. And now we have *Hook*, Spielberg's updating of *Peter Pan*, in which the perennial child has finally grown up, only to return to his youth. This long-gestating project has at last found its moment as, in this closing decade of the millennium, Hollywood seems determined to rediscover a lost innocence.

The subject of babyhood and childhood has become a major preoccupation for the current generation of film-makers. If the first wave of films, with their diaper do's and don'ts, came over as light-hearted parenting primers, it was because these Hollywood parents, the publicity machines assured us, *do* know how. In interviews Amy Heckerling, the director of *Look Who's Talking*, chats about her little girl; the *Baby Boom* production notes comment on writer/director/producer team Nancy Meyers and Charles Shyer's progeny; and the notes for *Parenthood* round up the number of children that the crew has between them. At the same time, demographics pundits provide statistics for changing audience profiles which show that the baby boom generation is putting cinema back in the family way. As innumerable Mr and Mrs Worthingtons groom junior for a star-spangled career, those 30s days, when movie moguls hired rosters of bright-eyed moppets to feature in wholesome and uplifting popular stories and Shirley Temple was Hollywood's top box office attraction, seem to be with us once more.

These days, with the nuclear family in crisis and cases of child abuse regularly making the headlines, childhood cannot be so coyly romanticised. But infants are a sticky issue right from their inception. The uproar caused last summer by two images proved revealing. The clothing company Benetton, which has developed a flair for contentious advertising campaigns, hit the rawest nerve when they displayed a poster of a wrinkled and bloody newborn baby not yet severed from its umbilical cord. The picture provoked such outrage that it was withdrawn on the grounds that it was a contravention of 'good taste'. Only weeks

As Hollywood regresses into its second childhood, and Peter Pan rides high once more, Lizzie Francke argues that women get a raw deal in the search for lost innocence

Boys and girls come out to play



Hooking children: the vengeful captain who steals children, above;

one of the lost boys with a 'grown-up' Peter Pan, opposite

before, *Vanity Fair* had attempted to boost its sales with an equally controversial cover photograph of the nude and heavily pregnant Demi Moore. That these images incited so many mail bags of passionately declared feelings shows how deeply uncomfortable our culture is with the bare and visceral facts of life, especially now that reproduction is complicated by the threat of Aids. The pictures may have been crit-

icised for profaning the sacred experience of pregnancy and birth, but it seemed the protesters were wishing away the experience itself.

**"Wendy, I ran away the day I was born".
Peter in 'Peter Pan'**

The baby comedies certainly tidy away the embarrassing business of birth. Indeed, the era of the stork seems to have returned. In *Baby Boom* and *Three Men and a Baby*, the little bundles drop out of space like ET to precipitate change in the lives of their respective hosts. J.C. – the "tiger lady" careerist in *Baby Boom* – inherits a thirteen-month-old girl whom she perceives initially as an appalling misfortune, while in *Three Men and a Baby* the female infant is deposited inconveniently at the door of three confirmed bachelors and mistaken initially for contraband goods. In Lawrence Kasdan's forthcoming *Grand Canyon*, a mother on the verge of menopause achieves fulfilment after she miraculously discovers a foundling underneath the bushes.

This nervousness about baby matters can also be detected in the responses of 'grown-up' critics. It quickly became fashionable to gag on these movies, while the subs got back to basics



with catchy headlines. *Baby Boom* generated such sniggering phrases as "Coochie-coochie goo" (the *Guardian*) and the more suggestive "She Stoops to Caca" (*Village Voice*). Both babyhood and motherhood took on the associations of dirty and primeval, their otherness trivialised in a glib one-liner.

Baby Boom in particular was derided as facile and trite – *Variety* described it as "transparent and one-dimensional" with "the superficiality of a project inspired by a lame New York magazine cover story and sketched out on a cocktail napkin at Spago's". But it tapped into a powerful and emotionally satisfying fantasy, in which women could 'have it all', in spite of a society that denies them this possibility in real life. For this to happen, J.C. and baby have to be banished from Manhattan's masculinised, strutting city culture to leafy Vermont. In this apple-filled Eden, J.C. meets and romances a softly spoken vet – a man who is kind to women and animals – as well as bringing up baby and running a successful food business.

Baby Boom is one of the few baby films to centre the predicament of parenthood on a woman – though of course in all these movies it is the value and status of motherhood and

mothering which seem to be at stake. In *Three Men and a Baby*, the child arouses 'maternal' feelings in the macho trio. Their bachelor pad is transformed into a giant romper suite in which they can dress up and play at being mommies. They take up the challenge of pampers and pinny and prove that they too can nurture – a feminising experience which they are reluctant to give up when the baby's biological mother returns to the scene.

"I don't want to go to school and learn solemn things", he told her passionately.

"I don't want to be a man. O Wendy's mother, if I was to wake up and feel there was a beard!"

Peter in 'Peter Pan'

In *Baby Boom* the child precipitates a return to a forgotten pastoral idyll which comforts and nourishes the soul jaded by urban life. And the theme is taken up by another recent wave of films, in which adults resort to the childish as a sanctuary from the harshness of the city. Usually the change is provoked by a male identity crisis. In *Hook*, Peter Pan has grown up to be a workaholic corporate attorney who neglects his family. Instead of going to see his son play

baseball, he sends a flunky along to tape it, and he spends so much time on his portable telephone that he fails to hear his wife's gentle complaints.

But when, on a visit to Granny Wendy in London, his children are kidnapped by a vengeful Captain Hook and whisked away to Neverland, Peter must return there to save them. As Spielberg expounded in a recent interview in the US magazine *Premiere*, Peter not only saves the family, but "rescued the memory of himself as a child and carries this best friend with him for the rest of his life. It will never leave him again". Adhering closely to the kind of male consciousness-raising manifesto expounded by Robert Bly in his best-selling book *Iron John*, this process involves much finger-painting and drum-beating as Peter gets back to nature, metamorphosing from yuppie lawyer into wild child. Only then has he the mettle to do battle with the steely Hook who has stolen his son's affections (his daughter drops out of the picture altogether).

With its quips about the Peter Pan complex, *Hook* indulges in a pseudo-psychoanalytical knowingness as good father confronts bad. As well as *Iron John*, it seems to have culled its ►

◀ ideas from psycho-babble self-help books with titles like *The Child Within*. But what Spielberg leaves out in his affectionate re-reading of J. M. Barrie is the uncanny nature of the boy who refuses to mature. Described in the novel as a child with gnashing milk-white teeth, a greedy look in his eye and a detachable shadow, he seems to have an ominous connection with that other *fin-de-siècle* spectre, the vampire. He feeds on emotional sustenance from the countless Wendys he transports to Neverland, where they tell him "stories about himself, to which he listens eagerly". This happy routine, the reader is told, will go on for as long as "children are gay and innocent and heartless". A problem child indeed.

Hook's Peter is not alone in his mid-life trauma. His journey back into childhood is shared by the protagonists of *Regarding Henry* and *The Fisher King* (which, like *Hook*, features the goblinish Robin Williams). Through some misfortune, the heroes of these films all regress to a helpless infantile state and, after being mothered back to health by an ever-patient wife or girlfriend, become kinder, nicer and more emotionally evolved individuals. The detestable Henry – an avaricious Manhattan lawyer who cheats on his wife and ignores his daughter – is shot in the head before he changes his ways. Once reborn, he has to learn to speak all over again and finds solace in painting flowers, baking cookies and being nice to animals. Both wife and daughter appear very proud of him.

Likewise, the rebirthing of *The Fisher King's* heroes takes place in a Manhattan that is slowly being ground to dust. The slick and mouthy Lucas' career as a radio DJ disintegrates after a massacre triggered by his goading one of his listeners too far. His salvation comes in the form of a babbling Holy Fool who sets him on a make-believe quest. As with *Hook*

– and, indeed, the baby comedies – the restorative power of play and fantasy is crucial. In the film's final image, the two new-found buddies in their birthday suits sing under the stars in Central Park, which is about as close to mother nature as one can get in New York.

Mother nature is also all-embracing in the meandering *Grand Canyon*, Lawrence Kasdan's bigger chill for the fortysomethings. Here, the crisis of the central character Mack (another lawyer) is again precipitated by the collapse of a city culture – this time in a violent and ghettoised Los Angeles. As the city of angels goes to the devil, Mack reaches out across social divides to other like-minded souls – Simon, for instance, a tow-truck driver who Mack believes has saved his life.

Kasdan's pompous film expostulates 'feel good' sentiments about life-affirming friendships between black and white, rich and poor. That national monument, the Grand Canyon, provides a metaphor for these unions, representing a womb-like refuge for the disaffected. This return to a natural order allows men to bond with each other while the women trailing behind them seem just to want to have more babies.

The same notion of a healing return to nature is evident in *The Prince of Tides*, which opens with images of children playing like water babies in the briny waves – their sanctuary from a violent father. One of them, Tom, now grown up, estranged from his wife and creatively blocked, is the film's hero. In order to help cure his suicidal twin sister, he regresses to a childhood moment of horrific trauma, in which he, his mother and siblings were raped. Spellbound by his sister's therapist (played by the director and star, Barbra Streisand), whom he adopts as his own, he plumbs the depths of the past and eventually breaks the silence surrounding the event. This emotional journey is

facilitated by his therapist's nurturing mother-love, which reunites him with his feminine side and enables him to return to the bosom of his family – again, women, like the sea, offer sanctuary.

"Families suck! I wish they would all disappear".

Kevin in 'Home Alone'

Is it a sense of disappointment in parental authority figures that motivates Hollywood's regression to childhood? In *JFK*, baby-boomer Oliver Stone looks back nostalgically to an era of political innocence. Central to the 'grand conspiracy' idea explored in his film is the beatification of Kennedy as a guiltless leader, with Camelot displaced into a prelapsarian Neverland. In a recent article, Stone expands on his thesis: "And we, Kennedy's godchildren, the baby-boom generation that believed his stirring words and handsome image, are like Hamlet in the first act, children of a slain leader, unaware of why he was killed or even that a fake figure inherits the throne". Daddy promised them everything but they were left with My Lai.

Stone's stirring rhetoric portrays America as a dysfunctional family, with a generation of betrayed children working through collective Oedipal neurosis in a mass psychotherapy session. *JFK's* epilogue dedicates itself to "the young in whose spirit the search for the truth marches on", while the valiant Jim Garrison looks to his son as the future custodian of the gospel of history.

In Wes Craven's *Grand Guignol* pantomime *The People Under the Stairs*, the hero is a thirteen-year-old boy named Fool whose task it is to liberate a cellar full of blind, deaf and dumb lost boys from bogus parents who bear a curious resemblance to Nancy and Ron. It transpires that this sadistic couple have been stealing



News from nowhere: Babies arrive unbidden in 'Three Men and a

Baby', left, and for career woman J.C. in 'Baby Boom', above



A man's world:
Kevin in 'Home Alone'
is inadvertently left
behind by his family,

left; a father and
son enjoying quality
time together in
'Parenthood', above

children in order to find pure specimens. Any child who transgresses by hearing, seeing or speaking evil is punished according to its crime. Unsurprisingly, the one obedient child who has escaped their vicious abuse is a girl – a fey Alice imprisoned in the attic of their rotting gothic gingerbread house. In this grim fairytale, Craven, the creator of child-killer Freddy, plays out fears about the warped values of Republican America.

Billed as “a family comedy without the family”, last year’s phenomenal hit *Home Alone* also exploited cracks in the domestic framework and exhibited a lack of confidence in parental figures. Wishing his family away and having that wish granted when he is accidentally excluded from a Christmas trip, young Kevin must use his anarchic wits to keep at bay two sinister but bungling intruders who attempt to violate the sacred space of his suburban home. Kevin succeeds in repelling the invasion, unnerved only momentarily by the nightmarish jaws of the basement furnace, and by his own reflection in the parental bedroom mirror, which sends him reeling away in an Edvard Munch-style primal scream.

Though the family is reconstituted in a reg-

ular happy ending complete with sugary subplot, *Home Alone* does engage with the perils – and power – of being a child. And the film’s success with adults (a sequel is promised later this year) suggests that what is going on is an identification with the young protagonist that answers a therapeutic need to return to the childhood sphere to work out some troubling unsettled score. Kevin’s wishing his parents away proves in the end to be emancipating. He negotiates quite capably the terrible absence that he has created for himself.

“When ladies used to come to me in dreams, I said, ‘pretty mother, pretty mother’. But when at last she really came, I shot her”.
Tootles in ‘Peter Pan’

If films like *Home Alone* and the more recent *My Girl* and *Little Man Tate* could be said to resurrect buried memories of childhood for adults, they do so with all the ambivalence of a child’s desire and demands. While problem parents can be wished away, they are also seen as necessary to the child’s individuation and socialisation. And it is the mother in particular who is at the centre of these conflicts, shad-

owing these films with her absence as much as her presence.

Set in the early 70s, *My Girl* is unusual in that it features a young heroine. Veda grows up in a funeral home which lacks a maternal presence (her mother died in childbirth and she believes that she was responsible for killing her). Initially she resents the kindly, free-spirited woman who becomes consort to her father and friend to herself. But this female influence becomes an essential element in her progress to adult femininity through a world darkened by death – not only her mother’s, but that of her best friend (a boy) as well.

In *Little Man Tate*, which chronicles one year in the life of a gifted child, the burden of motherhood is split between two women: Dede, Tate’s biological mother, and Jane, his teacher. In a film where the male characters are conspicuously flimsy, both female figures are seen as essential to the well-being of the young boy and enjoy their relationship with him. *Little Man Tate* takes up the viewpoint of the intellectually precocious, emotionally needy son, but it also poignantly examines the women’s perspectives as each in turn is rejected and then revalued by this ‘little man’. Unlike many of these movies, this one allows considerable space to the frustrations of its mother figures.

These films attach positive values to motherhood – in *Little Man Tate*, to the exclusion of fatherhood. The horror comedy *Problem Child* is an exception. Here, the ghastly Junior Messianically ditches his adoptive mom like a piece of unwanted baggage (she is trussed up in a suitcase and evacuated from the narrative) and galivants off with dad in a celebration of male bonding. Generally, though, these Hollywood pictures gesture towards a re-evaluation of mothering as a regenerative force, giving it a surprisingly beneficent central role. But ‘good’ mother figures, of course, are those who stand by their little and big men, as do the stoical wives of *Hook*’s Peter and *JFK*’s Jim Garrison. Their own desires take second place.

Hollywood’s wish to return to prelapsarian innocence is nothing if not ambivalent. The happy, smiling faces of its babies provoke intense anxiety, while existence in Neverland appears positively precarious. J. M. Barrie’s own description says it all: “The astonishing splashes of colour here and there, and coral reefs and rakish looking craft in the offing... It would be an easy map if that were all; but there is also the first day at school, religion, fathers, the round pond, needlework, murders, hangings, verbs that take the dative... and so on; and either they are part of the island or they are another map showing through, and it is all rather confusing, especially as nothing will stand still...” In such hazardous conditions, it is hardly surprising that the movies call up traditional images of maternal stability, or that they should reflect a conventional ambivalence towards maternal figures. For those who are asked to continue to rock the cradle, however, there is even less to celebrate.

Hook opens on 10 April and is reviewed on page 50 of this issue

Is cinema still possible? That's the issue raised by 'La Belle Noiseuse', argues Thomas Elsaesser

Rivette and the end of cinema

● There are films about painters, films that feature paintings in their plots, and there are films about particular paintings. In the first category, the recent centenary has given us a glut of Van Gogh movies (Paul Cox, Robert Altman, Maurice Pialat), and in Derek Jarman's *Caravaggio* (1986) we had the anti-myth to the myth of the creative genius tormented by his Art. What remains, in one form or another, is 'the agony and the ecstasy', whether played by Kirk Douglas or Nigel Terry.

Paintings, and especially painted portraits, abound in what has been called the 'women's paranoia cycle' of Hollywood melodramas of the 40s, and star prominently in some celebrated *films noirs* of the 50s: one thinks of *Rebecca* (1940) and *Suspicion* (1941), *Laura* (1944) and *The Woman in the Window* (1944), *The Two Mrs Carrolls* (1946) and *Strangers on a Train* (1951). Hitchcock, as one can see, is particularly fond of them, but so are Germanic directors like Lang and Preminger. Such portraits activate a host of associations: partly historical (they often connote a period setting and a genre: the gothic); partly social (in a world of objects and people, a painting is always excessive in that it is both object and person); partly economic (whoever owns a painting has surplus value to display, which means it can also function as a signifier of class); and finally, the connotations are inescapably sexual (*Beauty and Fatality*, *Perfection*, *Woman*, the *Unattainable Object of Desire*). Sometimes they are the epitome of patriarchy, as Joan Fontaine's father disapprovingly looks down on her choice of Cary Grant as husband in *Suspicion*.

Films that feature series of paintings are mostly 'European', and they seem to have peaked in the 80s: Raúl Ruiz's *Hypothèse du tableau volé* (1978), Godard's *Passion* (1982), and – stretching the term painting a little – Peter Greenaway's *The Draughtsman's Contract* (1982). In each case, what is explored are *tableaux vivants*, though to different ends. Greenaway sees social hierarchies mirrored in the pictorial geometries, both of which fail to contain the more elemental or anarchic forces set free by (female) sexuality (of which the moving image becomes an ally). In Ruiz, the *tableaux vivants*

tell of all the narrative possibilities – all the possible movies, in other words – locked up in static images, and of interpretation games far more devious but also more interesting than the analytic master-narratives of Marx or Freud. For Ruiz, the relation between cinema and painting raises the question of pictorial realism generally, meaningful only if read as allegory. In Godard's *Passion*, the stillness of the *tableaux* is not only juxtaposed with the machine noise on the factory floor and the noise cluttering up personal relationships; the scenes from Velasquez, Rembrandt, Ingres, Goya – even while depicting violence and destruction – suggest the possibilities of existential confrontation not afforded any of the protagonists. Painting, it seems, provides a vanishing point from which to view a world in the process of disintegration, but at the price, as in Kafka, of excluding its protagonist from both.

It is not immediately clear what category Jacques Rivette's *La Belle Noiseuse* belongs to. Attention seems equally divided between the artist, the portrait that gives the film its title, and the painting as material artefact and commodity. Emphasised as in no other film is the process of creation itself, the artist's labour-intensive hard grind (or 'scratch', since it is pen-and-ink on paper we mostly hear), and the bone-crushing, limb-twisting postures the model is subjected to. Rivette's story is simple enough: a famous painter, Eduard Frenhofer (Michel Piccoli), suffering from a prolonged fallow period, is persuaded by his dealer, Porbus (Gilles Arbona), to take up again a canvas which he, Frenhofer, had abandoned ten years earlier – the *Belle Noiseuse* of the title – with the help of a new model, Marianne (Emmanuelle Béart), the girlfriend of Nicolas (David Bursztein), an aspiring young painter. The couple happen to be visiting the area where Frenhofer has made his home, not least because Nicolas wants to

'Nothing to paint,
nothing to paint with,
and yet nothing
left to do but paint'

know what the great master has been up to in his country refuge. Though outraged at first, Marianne consents to be his sitter, and over a space of five days the painting is completed.

Hovering in the wings is Frenhofer's wife, Liz (Jane Birkin), his erstwhile favourite model and the original *Belle Noiseuse*, who is both eager for Frenhofer to get over his creative block and afraid of being replaced. But she knows that 'Frenhofer est un gentleman', and indeed, he has no sexual interest in Marianne, except that the casual, sometimes brutal and in the end quite sadistic regime he inflicts on his model during the sittings does seem to unnerve the young woman, her poise and cool temporarily breaking under the strain. Both couples go through an emotional crisis, deeper and possibly more serious for the older couple, since it seems to convince Liz that not even the completion of the painting will release either of them from their living death.

Porbus wants to celebrate the painting's completion, and a picnic in the grounds of Frenhofer's estate serves as a kind of coda, with the young couple also departing, though not before Nicolas tells Frenhofer that he is not too impressed by the new work. What he does not know is that the painting on display is not *La Belle Noiseuse*, but one which Frenhofer had done in one all-night session, not even bothering with the girl as model. In voice-over, Marianne tells the audience that what happened after they got back to Paris is another story...

Arguably, Rivette means us to take his drama as just that: Frenhofer's struggle to conquer his anxiety, to wrestle with his muse and angel, in order to bequeath to posterity some essence of his vision, the work that says it all. "Faster, faster", he admonishes Marianne, as if death was already too close for any mere terrestrial motion towards a goal. Cloistered in his sombre studio, while outside Nature is vibrating to a mediterranean mid-summer heat, the tragic irony would then be that in spite of subjecting himself and those around him to intense pain and sacrifice, there can only be a masterpiece that nobody sees, and one that brings neither redemption nor transcendence.

Frenhofer is then the modernist after modernism, the antithesis of Cezanne (who would not have tired painting the view from Frenhofer's tower and balcony), but also the opposite of Picasso, for whom the painter and his model/lover/wife became the emblem of how to renew his art by dramatising through this relationship every conceivable vital and venal, violent and voyeuristic impulse. Just such a sketch evoking Picasso can be found among Frenhofer's discarded canvases stacked on the studio wall, perhaps because, as Rivette mentions in an interview, his friend Claire Denis bombarded him with Picasso postcards depicting this motif while Rivette was hesitating whether to undertake the project. In the end, Frenhofer is more like Beckett's comment on Bram van Velde in *Four Dialogues with Georges Dutoit*: "nothing to paint, nothing to paint with, and yet nothing left to do but paint".

The success of *La Belle Noiseuse* makes it plau-

sible that audiences see in it a qualified but nonetheless comforting reaffirmation of the values not only of Art, but also of European art cinema. Indeed, perhaps Rivette (until now mostly an enigmatic outsider even in his own country) wanted to try his hand at the genre better known from Eric Rohmer: *La Belle Noiseuse* could well be one of those *contes moraux* which have become Rohmer's trademark. Rivette's tight plotting, the film's many formal symmetries and neat ironies, the division into clearly felt scenes and acts, the respect for the unities of French classical drama all recall Rohmer, both theme and setting making one think of *La Collectionneuse* (1966) or Rohmer's homage to Matisse, *Pauline à la plage* (1982). The opening of *La Belle Noiseuse*, with the young couple pretending to be strangers who succumb to lust at first sight in order to shock two dowdy tourists from England is pure Rohmer, if it wasn't also vintage Rivette (comparable to the opening of *L'Amour par terre*, 1984, where a solemn group of men and women are led through backstreets and courtyards up several flights of stairs into a Paris apartment to become eavesdropping witnesses to the infidelities and domestic complications of an executive with a wife and a mistress, before the spectator realises that these are down-at-heel actors who have invented not street theatre, but apartment theatre).

To be familiar with other Rivette films certainly helps to make sense not only of this opening. If there are still any auteurs out there, here is a chance to practise the old skills

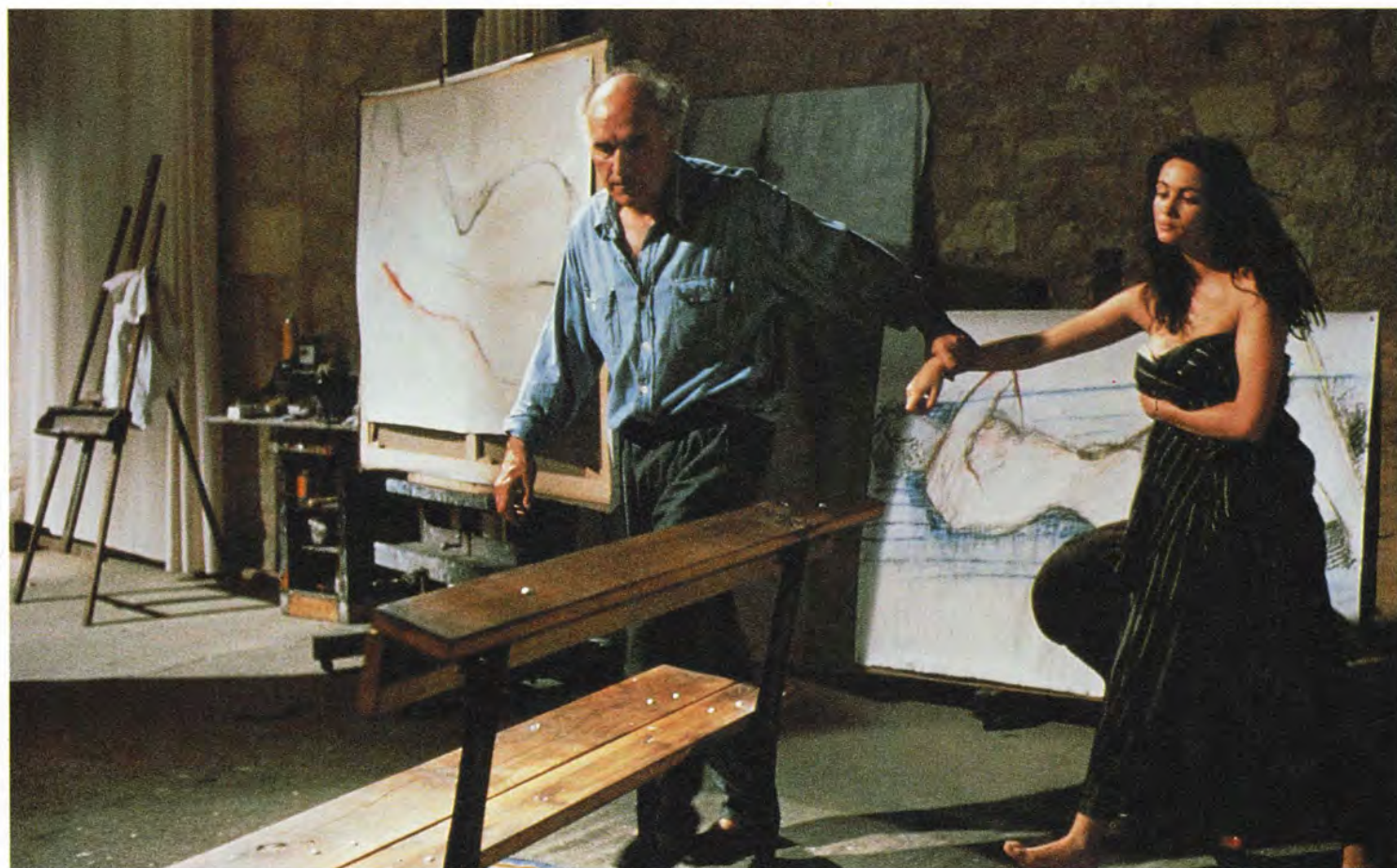
of recognising personal themes and formal obsessions, of spotting allusions and putting together the cross-references and inter-texts: in other words, precisely, to salute the artist and his inimitable signature. What in the earlier films had been the structuring principle – namely to use the theatre, a performance to be rehearsed, a show to be put on, in the course of which the characters find out some, inevitably painful, truth about themselves – is here the function of the painting, in each case setting off art versus life, the classical against the vagaries of personal relations, formal anger against the anarchies of *l'amour fou* and the destructiveness of self-obsession. Rivette himself has called this principle “*la vie parallèle*”, and virtually all his films take one text and overwrite or underlay it with another.

La Belle Noiseuse is unquestionably an auteur's film, but the very fact that it advertises this status so insistently suggests that we may have to regard it as something that no longer can be taken as read. Perhaps the very principle of *la vie parallèle* has assumed another meaning, and makes its own contribution to a particular polemic: a film about an artist (what more overdetermined choice of actor for this part than Michel Piccoli?), a female star (Emmanuelle Béart, fresh from her success as Manon des sources), and the difficulties of fixing a representation. It also counts as a move in what seems to be a *Kulturkampf* raging in France over the meaning and definition of French cinema. In this cultural battle, ‘painting and cinema’ has become a kind of code, though it is, at least

for an outsider, far from clear exactly where the lines are drawn.

Among the numerous analyses of this area, the most instructive for bringing some of the undercurrents to the surface was Raymond Bellour's lecture at the NFT last year. He compared what is happening in the realm of cinema and the image to the “revolution in poetic language” of which the writer Mallarmé was the messenger, in a lecture in Oxford in 1894 on the theme of “*on a touché au vers*”, meaning the breakdown of metre in French poetry and thus of the radical difference between prose and verse. Bellour, half-jokingly, half-seriously suggested that he too had a message to bring to London: “*on a touché à l'image*”. The divide for him seemed to run between *cinéma* and the *nouvelles images*, the latter itself a complex historical phenomenon, obliging us to see Nam June Paik taking the first Sony portapack into the street, Christian Metz writing his first film-semiological essay, and Godard making *Le Mépris* (1963) as all belonging to the same moment in time.

In other words, the ‘crisis’, which in Britain since the mid-60s concerned the fate of popular culture, the avant-garde, high culture and high-tech, working its way through the debates as the issue of representation, consumption and ‘spectatorship’, was in France a debate about the material, linguistic and psychic support of cinema – all driven by the fact that the photographic image could no longer be taken as the medium's self-evident basis, thereby doing away with any analogical relation ►



The old man and the model: Frenhofer (Michel Piccoli) and Marianne (Emmanuelle Béart) – he the Minotaur and she Ariadne?

◀ between reality and the image. It is against this background that in a fundamental sense, painting could become a metaphor for the cinema (as the medium associated with the history of the photographic image) in contrast to the electronic or digital image. Given its immeasurably longer history, painting was to provide a certain vantage point.

Thus behind the equation 'cinema and painting', other (dialectically intertwined or deeply antagonistic) pairs are lined up: cinema and architecture, cinema and video, cinema and television. What 'painting and cinema' seems to signal is not necessarily where one stands in the divide, but rather how one proposes to go about articulating that stand: perhaps *reculer pour mieux sauter*, or putting together an inventory. To this one could add a more local issue: the struggle over the critical heritage of *Cahiers du cinéma*, and the right to interpret the history of its influence. A two-volume chronicle which appeared last year, Antoine de Baecque's *Les Cahiers du cinéma, l'histoire d'une revue* apparently sent many ex-contributors and collaborators to their word-processors for rectifications, amplifications, justifications. In short, almost all aspects of French film culture seem to be involved in a major film-cultural stock-taking.

One of the most brilliant *Cahiers du cinéma* critics of the late 70s and early 80s, Serge Daney, gave up his job at the magazine and with it his cinephile convictions in 1987 when he became media critic of the daily *Libération*, embracing, indeed celebrating, television, advertising and commercial video with a gusto and wit not seen before in French journalism or criticism. Daney is perhaps the most radical among those who think it is time to repay the cinema its due: it has taught us how to look at the world; now we have to learn how to look at the other arts and media through the lens of cinema, but a cinema so naturalised, so culturally internalised as to be nowhere in particular and yet everywhere. In its near-hundred-year history, cinema has become a kind of truth, namely our truth.

What Daney had in mind was strikingly confirmed in a recent BBC2 *Moving Pictures* item devoted to the memory of Jean Vigo. Bernardo Bertolucci, asked to talk about *L'Atalante* (1934), quite spontaneously described the film not as a film, but as a reality existing in its own right, a reality existing next to other realities. He ended up talking about what he called a "liquid cinema", a notion especially suggestive. Bertolucci's way of celebrating Vigo contrasted with a no less enthusiastic Lindsay Anderson in the same programme, for whom there were masterpieces like *Zéro de conduite* (1933) which had inspired him in *If...*, and, even more importantly, there was an "artist" with a "personal vision", an entity to which he admonished all young film-makers to remain true. Bertolucci not only paid homage to Vigo by reworking a scene from *L'Atalante* he particularly liked – in *Last Tango in Paris* (1972), at the Canal St Martin, a life-belt with "L'Atalante" written on it is tossed to the couple in the water, only to sink



The discarded model: the painter's wife

like a stone. By giving the cinema a dense materiality, Bertolucci's ultimate compliment to Vigo was to speak of his film as existing in the real world, like a building, or indeed the Canal St Martin itself, landmarks we can all visit and inspect.

Martin Scorsese, too, has this attitude. Gone are the days when love of cinema meant talking about 'film as film' – works with their own aesthetic texture, structure and textuality. Like Bertolucci or Daney, we may now need to treat films as events that have happened to us, experiences that are inalienably ours, and thus as material facts. The cinema has helped carry the burden of history, or has given the illusion of carrying it, but it has also bequeathed a kind of double and parallel life, shadowing another one which is perhaps becoming ever more shadowy, as our culture's real past becomes its movies.

That Rivette's films – "*scènes de la vie parallèle*" – appear to hold in many ways key positions in the more specifically French debate is not in itself surprising when one remembers his beginnings. Probably the most intellectually precocious of the young Turks around Bazin and the early years of *Cahiers du cinéma*, Rivette was nonetheless – along with Godard – one of Bazin's more unruly sons when it came to decide whether he belonged to those who 'believed in reality' or those who 'believed in the image'. Championing Hawks and Hitchcock, and also Fritz Lang, Rivette always oscillated between the classical cinema of Wyler and Preminger beloved by Bazin, and a more offbeat Hollywood. He preferred the 'improbable truth' (the French title of Lang's *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt*, 1956) to Rossellini's 'things are there – why tamper with them?'

The reference point, then, for *La Belle Noiseuse* may well have to be Godard's *Passion*, which proved to be a key film of the 80s. As so often, Godard sensed the tremors announcing the landslide earlier than most, and in *Passion* and the accompanying television programme, *Scénario du film 'Passion'*, he began to redefine his cinema, and perhaps also the modern European cinema generally. Godard, precisely, went back to painting. But in *Passion*, cinema is the vanishing point between painting on one side and the video screen and monitor on the other: it is a 'film' shot with a big Mitchell camera that the Polish director is unable to finish, and it is perhaps no accident (for the genesis of Rivette's project) that *Passion* features Michel Piccoli as the patron and patriarch, lording it over not

only his employees, but his wife, who is the lover of Jerzy, playing the director (and used by Godard because he was the Man of Marble from Wajda's film), now unable to muster the 'solidarity' needed still to make cinema.

Seen as part of this dialogue of French film culture with itself, we have to assume that *La Belle Noiseuse*'s 'classicism', its well-lit sets and carefully composed shots, its 'logical' editing rhythm and shot changes, its balanced alternations between indoor scenes and the dappled outdoors, its day-times and its night-times, and thus its apparently solemn affirmation of the spiritual values of great art, is less a polemical re-statement of the *politique des auteurs*, and rather a more subtle or nuanced intervention in present-day cultural politics. Rivette has made an auteur's film, but one in the full knowledge that it has to be an auteur's film, for reasons of survival, not only as bulwark against the anonymous output of television, but also so it can be shown at Cannes. Festivals are the places where films financed by television receive the world's endorsement that they still count as cinema, by a process that Godard has called "giving a film its passport".

A number of distinct aspects of Rivette's film come to mind in support of reading it as just such a statement about the impossibility of the auteur and yet the necessity of being one. First, the question of authenticity and the original. What at first sight is curiously old-fashioned, if not naive, about *La Belle Noiseuse* is its belief in authenticity and the original throughout most of the movie, until Frenhofer, coolly and methodically, fakes himself by hiding his *Belle Noiseuse* forever, while passing off a painting quickly daubed during one late-night session as the fruit of ten years' creative agony. Apart from the three women in the know (who do not speak out), nobody so much as suspects the fraud and the substitution.

A second aspect is an argument about Authorship, Style and Signature. If *La Belle Noiseuse* is indeed the parting self-portrait of the author as a cultural icon of authentic art, signature itself substitutes for style. In Rivette's film, this signature comes from beyond the grave. In one of the most dramatic scenes, Frenhofer's wife enters his studio at night and looks at the painting (which we never see – except like a fetishist spying a piece of thigh, we catch a glimpse of carmine red when the covering sheet is accidentally lifted for an instant). Evidently shocked by what is on view, she walks round the painting, and next to his signature on the back paints a cross, as if to confirm that this has been painted by a ghost. The gesture turns *La Belle Noiseuse* into something close to a horror film, half way between the gothic tales around painted portraits mentioned in the beginning and Roger Corman's *The Tomb of Ligeia* (1964) or *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1960).

A third argument is about craftsmanship, labour and duration. Much of the film is taken up with the act of painting. The fact that in *La Belle Noiseuse* all that effort, all that painful scratching of pen on paper, the sketches, the posing, the crucifixions that the model's body

undergoes, seems in the end to have been produced merely to be hidden forever, is perhaps a more oblique comment than one at first assumes on what can be the relation between the labour that enters into a work and its value or effect. The discrepancy between labour and value was already the subject of Whistler's argument with Ruskin, and thus stands as a crucial debate at the threshold of the modern era, signalling the end of correlating the (exhibition or social use) value of a work of art with the labour (read: personal pain or mental anguish) invested in producing it.

Fourth, the contest between cinema and painting over 'representation'. The artist-painter's torment in the cinema is always slightly ridiculous, because it is betrayed by the cinema's facility in rendering what the painter is striving after – this particular quality of light, that particular painterly effect, this particular likeness. Hence, any canvas actually shown in a film invariably turns out to be either bad art or a fake, the cinema always seeming to mock painting at the same time as it defers to its cultural status. One of the most shocking moments in John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* was when he walked up to a Botticelli in what looked like the National Gallery, took out a Stanley knife and cut a sizeable square out of the priceless canvas. After such knowledge, no painting can survive its representation in cinema: one more reason no doubt why the canvas must remain hidden from the camera.

Fifth, an argument about different kinds of time. Well before German directors like Syberberg opted for length to make themselves heard, Rivette produced monsters of extended time, from *L'Amour fou* (1968) to *Out One* (1970). It is, apart from anything else, a response to the need of European art films to counteract the blockbuster media-blitz of Hollywood. Yet the length of Rivette's films also foregrounds the spectator's place, and the experience of viewing – not excluding boredom. Rivette is a more experimental director than most, opening his films to varying degrees of attention and attentiveness, and by making painting his subject he is able to enact a certain kind of viewing: contemplation, exploration, negotiating distance and proximity, occupying a different space and yet 'entering into a picture'. The emphasis on both process and product reinforces this parallel, so that over long stretches of the film, the spectator is 'alone with his thoughts', watching, as it were, 'paint dry' – itself an aesthetic statement in the age of media instantaneity and electronic images.

But *La Belle Noiseuse* also enacts this different form of spectatorship concretely, carving a 'spatial form' out of the time it takes to view it. Length becomes one of the auteur's weapons in his battle against so-called 'dominant cinema': the film lays and splays itself across television's time slots and scheduled evanescence, as well as breaking down a first-run cinema's two or three evening performances. *La Belle Noiseuse* is four hours, carefully segmented internally into dramatic acts, but also externally, by a break which the film itself announces. Thus, when

the model in the film gets giggly from exhaustion, and several times grabs for a cigarette, the film advises patrons in the cinema to take a break as well. *La Belle Noiseuse* is nothing if not aware of the kind of 'special occasion' contract it has with its audience, and although television's archetypal moment of disjuncture, the commercial break, might fit just as well, one wonders how the two-hour television version manages to convey this double articulation of duration.

All this may be no more than saying that *La Belle Noiseuse* can be and must be read as allegory, or rather, as that particular form of allegory known as *mise-en-abyme*. This is perhaps the more surprising, since the film is, in its narrative as well as its *mise-en-scène*, one of the most 'classical' films imaginable, respecting at all times the ground rules of cinematic realism. But rather than being conformist, this classicism functions as an act of resistance.

Looking at Rivette's oeuvre, it is possible to argue that his films have always anticipated another technology – that of video, of the video-recorder and of electronic images, especially in their obsession with parallel realities, with going into dream-time and paranoia-time, with layering one text with another, confronting theatre and life in a modulated commentary on Anna Magnani's question in Renoir's *Le Carrosse d'or* (1952): "where does the theatre end and life begin"? But the tension and pathos of Rivette's films, their quality of clairvoyance and hyper-alertness depend on the resistance which the medium 'film' offers and imposes on both film-maker and viewers in differentiating and resolving this layering: these strainings after representing twilight states, these superimpositions of parallel worlds need a realist medium, need the solidity of celluloid. Similarly, in *La Belle Noiseuse*, the pay-off of all this labour comes when Frenhofer takes out the unfinished canvas of ten years' earlier in order to paint the new picture over the old, seemingly obliterating his wife-as-model with the young woman, the two merging and mingling, the face of the first gradually, but only partially, hidden beneath a veil of blue crayon. It might be a video-effect, and yet it crucially must not be a video-effect.

Ultimately, it is this capacity to be a 'realist text' and allegorical at the same time that makes *La Belle Noiseuse* contemporary, and, to my mind, an 'intervention' rather than a conservative restatement. One might cite Borges and Roland Barthes: Rivette is re-writing a classical (readerly) text as an allegorical (writerly) text. As in the case of Barthes' most famous allegorical rewriting of a realist text, Balzac's novella *Sarrasine* in *S/Z*, so the realist text of Rivette is also a novella by Balzac, *Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu*. From it, Rivette takes the initial situa-

tion: the young Poussain offers his mistress to the master Frenhofer as a model, in order to get a glimpse of the one painting Frenhofer refuses to show, *La Belle Noiseuse*, reputed to be a masterpiece: the *chef d'oeuvre inconnu*. In Rivette's film, the title of the painting is itself thematised, by what may well be no more than a piece of folk-etymology: *noiseuse* comes from *noix*, nuts, and in Quebecois slang means a woman who is a 'pain in the ass'.

Deliberately and bluntly, *La Belle Noiseuse* parades a world of men who enter into a kind of bargain or exchange whose object is a woman: not only is the young painter's girlfriend offered as a bait or gift, she is also intended to substitute for Frenhofer's wife, regarded by Porbus as the cause of Frenhofer's creative block. But the twist and thus the film's central allegory, or re-reading of Balzac, is that Rivette makes of Frenhofer the Minotaur, a creature both powerful and baffled, half-man, half-beast. It brings the Frenhofer figure once more close to Picasso, for whom the Minotaur was a central reference point. But more importantly, it emphasises the different role the young woman has as the sacrificial victim, offered by the man to appease the man-god/man-beast of artistic genius. And the question which the film raises in that last voice-over is whether Marianne is in fact a kind of Ariadne, venturing forward so that the wily, but also cowardly Theseus can follow, to slay the Minotaur, or at any rate, to take away his power. What in Balzac is an Oedipus story becomes in Rivette a Theseus myth, or rather an Ariadne story.

This suggests, finally, two things. First, I would see in *La Belle Noiseuse* Rivette's decided plea for a cinema where the virtual realities and parallel worlds are created by the fact that you can believe in what you do not see, in contrast to a Hollywood cinema where you can see what you cannot possibly believe (thanks to special effects), or to a television which can do neither, and only asserts. Second, it suggests that the change from the photographic image to the digital image is more than a change in technology, or delivery system, but will entail a long and protracted struggle, not only over the interpretation of this or that film, but over the meaning of the cinema altogether.

This debate, hardly begun, seems figured in the allegorical *mise-en-abyme* into which the canvas of *La Belle Noiseuse* so definitively disappears. The painting is finally what one suspected it to have been: a mirror, but a mirror standing for 'the visual', through which our civilisation seems destined to step, rematerialising on the other side as something quite different. Rivette, perfectly agreeing with Daney's analysis, might take exactly the opposite position. Once the painting has vanished and the guests are departed, we hear the sounds of the village: a baby crying, the voice of a woman answering, the noises of people at work – a world outside once more comes alive, though now perhaps we have the inner eye to see it.

'La Belle Noiseuse' opened on 20 March and is reviewed on page 44 of this issue

Length becomes one of the auteur's weapons in his battle against so-called 'dominant cinema'

John Cassavetes turned his private grudge against cinema to good effect, argues Richard Combs

As time goes by

● Since his death three years ago, John Cassavetes seems to be everywhere, references to him setting off a chain reaction of other names, film-makers who might have been influenced by him, have benefited from his example, their films made possible by his pioneering work. It would be interesting to describe Cassavetes through the Cassavetes effect, to construe his own work from that of film-makers who have been likened to him.

So Robert Altman would exemplify a certain narrative messiness, characters who talk over each other or at cross-purposes; Martin Scorsese represents the ethnic side, the documentary of street life, the passion for music, and how all the above can turn a genre movie into something personal (Scorsese and Cassavetes dreamed up the basic plot of *Chinese Bookie* together); Mike Leigh shows the pain of minutely scrutinised reality. Leigh is also as impatient as Cassavetes used to be with the assumption that 'improvisation' means making it up as you go along (Cassavetes usually took a script credit on the films he directed).

In his day, Cassavetes cut a lonely figure in the film world. He apparently had no cinematic antecedents; his experimentation, his attitudes and objectives, appeared self-contained and even formulated in anti-film terms. He became a film director by accident, or, as he himself saw it, as a by-product of something else. In the late 50s, he had helped to set up an actors' workshop in New York, for developing theatrical skills through improvisations. One of these produced the idea for *Shadows*, which became a

film after private sponsors responded to an appeal on a radio show.

But even when the film was completed, Cassavetes still thought of it as a means to an end. "When we made *Shadows* we had no intention of offering it for commercial distribution. It was an experiment all the way, and our main objective in making it was just to learn. It was an attempt for people to know their craft" (*Films & Filming*, February 1961). Cassavetes also had a private grudge against the cinema: "I had worked in a lot of films and I couldn't adjust to the medium, I found I wasn't as free as I could be on stage or in a live television show. So for me, it was primarily to find out why I was not free – because I didn't particularly like to work in films..." At one point in *Shadows*, Lelia (Lelia Goldoni) replies grumpily to an invitation to go to the cinema, "I don't like the movies", and although she has other reasons for being put out, to do with life, sex and race, it's tempting to think that she is speaking for her creator.

Shadows was shot in 16mm on the streets of New York, without a script but with detailed character descriptions out of which the actors spun the different narrative threads. The freshness of the performances and the looseness of the shooting style made an immediate impact; harder to categorise as 'improvisation' or 'documentary', however, is the way the idiosyncratic dialogue establishes a density of character, mood and social scene without explaining anything. Three main storylines jostle along in a happy serendipity which turns into a complex reflection on race and identity. They involve the black Lelia, her brother Ben (Ben Caruthers), who with two white friends drifts aimlessly through parties and coffee bars, chatting up girls and putting down intellectual pretension, and their elder brother Hugh (Hugh Hurd), a struggling night-club singer.

To the American critic Parker Tyler, *Shadows* couldn't even be pigeonholed with the Beat counter-culture, with the 'alternative' cinema of Robert Frank and Alfred Leslie's *Pull My Daisy*, with its free-form commentary by Jack Kerouac and participation by poets Allen Ginsberg and Gregory Corso. To Tyler, Cassavetes' method was different from other attempts to bring a documentary realism to feature film-making.

"*Shadows* has been surprisingly well appreciated while mostly for the wrong reasons... No one, I believe, except the author of an article on Cassavetes in a small West Coast film magazine, has noticed the relation between the method of *Shadows* to that of Chekhov in his plays and especially his short stories. *Shadows* approaches its subject with the same casual directness as Chekhov his subjects... It takes a few characters and reveals their life situation; the situation moves behind the veil of full consciousness and yet it communicates" (*Film Culture*, No 24, 1962).

It's an intriguing connection – and more than that, the 'Chekhovian' element of *Shadows* becomes a continuity through Cassavetes' career, which otherwise does seem to break down into discrete, self-enclosed actors' experiments happening at irregular intervals. Time is

the essence of this element, and the core of the drama: time as something to be enjoyed in a moment-to-moment way, in the camaraderie of Ben and his two friends, but time also as a pressure, as something that can never quite be seized and forever provokes feelings of loss, failure and disappointment. *Carpe diem* is one thing, but Ben and his friends occasionally worry – or others worry for them – about their lack of purpose. After a climactic but pointless fight, Ben declares, "No more of this jazz for me, baby". Even more wistfully, his younger sister Lelia confesses, "I feel I should be further ahead than I am. Everything is passing me by".

And within this flux, this pressure, there's an intractability to problems of love and family that is beyond the power of time to heal or resolve. Ben and Lelia are black, but so light-skinned that they can 'pass' in the white world

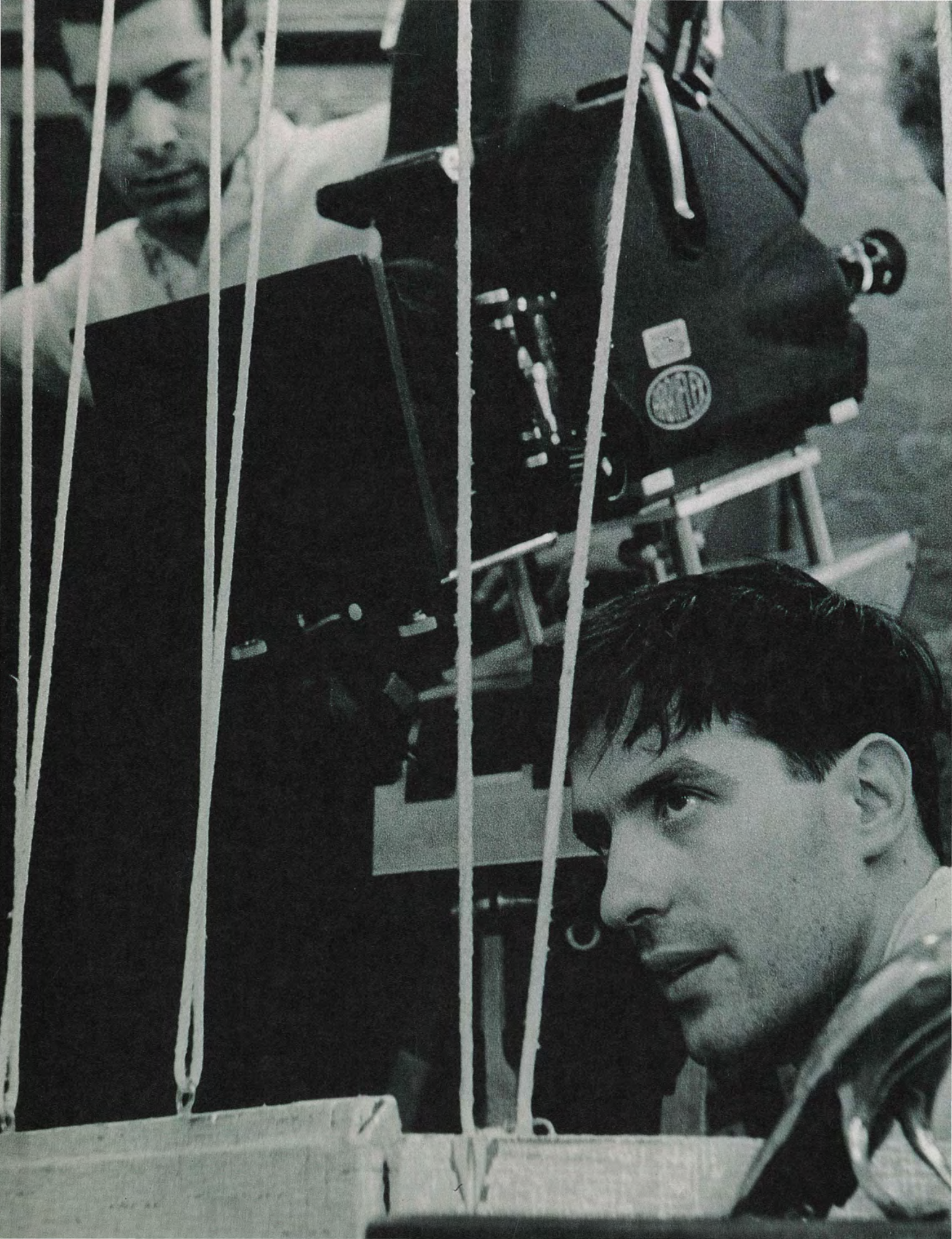


To be or not to be free: John Cassavetes directs 'Shadows', opposite; Gena Rowlands and John Marley reflected in 'Faces', above

– which is evidently responsible for the feelings of indefiniteness, of waste and guilty drifting, that they express in different ways. But their brother Hugh is unequivocally black, a quality which leaves them feeling both grateful and resentful. Lelia learns something unpleasant about her white lover Tony when he first meets Hugh, and Ben reacts aggressively when a black woman, a friend of Hugh's, makes advances to him at a party. Hugh, meanwhile, has his own problems with passing time, with his musical career stalled, at the beginning and end of the film, in bus and train terminals to third-rate out-of-town bookings.

It was nearly ten years before Cassavetes was again able to make a film completely on his own terms, and by the time of *Faces* much of what had been praised as radical in technique or original in setting about *Shadows* had disappeared or been transformed. Cassavetes, whose films after all begin with his own reality – and who now lived in California, where he began using his home as a location – had discovered that his reality was different.

"It is a picture about the middle-aged, high middle income bracket people that are made fun of in our society... One day I woke up and realised that I'm part of that society and almost everyone I know is... And I knew there was something to be said about these people and about their insular existence and about their place in a society that is frowned upon today" (*Cinema*, Spring 1968). In between these two films, Cassavetes directed two Hollywood pictures, *Too Late Blues* (1961) and *A Child Is* ▶



◀ *Waiting* (1962). On both he felt he had less than a free hand, and both have therefore been largely ignored in the Cassavetes 'canon'.

Social milieu aside, there are obvious similarities between *Shadows* and *Faces*. There's the helter-skelter camerawork that gives all possible leeway to the actors' freedom of movement and expression, the rambling conversational sallies and challenges, the tendernesses, hostility and loaded demands that people make of each other to 'be themselves'. But what Cassavetes essentially carries over is a tension between the hectic flux of experience, characters' need to rush from one experience to another, and a sense that the moment is already gone, the secret has been lost and the opportunity missed.

In the move from the city of New York to the country/suburban atmosphere of Los Angeles, Chekhovian rules still apply. The affluent home of business executive Richard Forst (John



John Cassavetes influences Gena Rowlands

Marley) and his wife Maria (Lynn Carlin) is full enough of mirrors, glassed-in paintings, polished surfaces and objects that give off a dazzle of reflections. But the people themselves behave in a similar way, seeking reassurance in relationships that are self-reflecting and obsessively duplicated. In a rage of middle-aged, mid-life dissatisfaction, Richard abandons his wife to spend the night with a prostitute, Jeannie (Gena Rowlands), who offers – the question of paid sex being kept in the background – a simulation of domestic support. Maria meanwhile goes out for the night with some friends, returning with an amiable beach boy, Chet (Seymour Cassel), with whom she spends the night but who then has to revive her from a suicide attempt in the morning.

Cassavetes compensates for the theatrical neatness of this construction – the action is confined to one night and morning – with an aggressive insistence on film in other ways. The story is framed as a film-within-a-film, Marley also playing a movie executive invited to a screening of something called *Faces* by a nervous gaggle of other executives: "We call it the *Dolce vita* of the commercial field..." *Faces* is also full of harsh variations in the film stock and lighting intensity, as the action moves from day to night and back again. Light and time seem to be cinematic gifts that can explode and explore the theatrical sameness of the setting.

If *Shadows* was Cassavetes' attempt to understand why he didn't feel free in film, *Faces* passes that challenge on to the characters, and to the performers playing them. The drives, the

necessities and the limits of performance are what shape any Cassavetes film – and they feed as well into the poignancy of the subject, the sense of time passing, of age as a real component of what one is and can do, the fear of never being as good as one would like to be. In *Faces*, Jeannie and Chet are the performers, younger than the 'clients' they entertain, but they are coy about their age, feeling perhaps as the barely twenty-year-old Lelia does in *Shadows* that they should be further ahead.

In this respect, far from being marginal to Cassavetes' work, *Too Late Blues* is crucial, as deserving of revival as the five films being re-released now. It may be plotted conventionally enough as the fall and redemption of its hero, jazzman Ghost Wakefield (Bobby Darin), but within that its moods are anything but conventional. It happily evokes the frail camaraderie of a group of jazz musicians, young but not as young as they could be: when they join in an impromptu game of baseball, one of them complains that, at thirtysomething, they're in danger of heart attacks. And they're at a point where the itch for success is beginning to overtake their satisfaction at playing the music they like for charity affairs or simply in the park "for the trees".

It's Ghost who eventually abandons the group, and is promoted to a tawdry kind of success, more gigolo than jazzman. They're all reunited for a happy ending that has inevitably been scorned as a Hollywood cop-out. But the mood is singularly downbeat: the group is now playing, and grateful for the work, in a cheap dancehall. This is a 'happy ending' consistent enough with Cassavetes' careful distinction between different kinds of success, with self-respect and the recognition of certain realities.

The career – or lack of it – of Ghost Wakefield is a fascinating link between the Hugh Hurd character in *Shadows* and such later Cassavetes performers as Cosmo Vitelli (Ben Gazzara) in *The Killing of a Chinese Bookie* and Myrtle Gordon (Gena Rowlands) in *Opening Night*. Like Ghost's group, Cosmo has found a level of success – owning, operating and choreographing a 'sophisticated' strip show in Los Angeles – which doesn't satisfy his sense of where he should be, but expresses who and what he is well enough. Pretension to something else – a kind of high style – leads him into debt with the Mob, and then like Ghost he is forced to fight his way down to a level he is comfortable with.

One of Cosmo's last acts, with a bullet hole in his side that may or may not be fatal, is to lecture the fractious members of his floor show on the necessity of being 'comfortable' with who or what you have chosen to be, that there are no absolute standards in life any more than there are any absolute standards of success or failure in show business ("What's your truth is my falsehood, and what's your falsehood is my truth").

It's a curious philosophy, at least with which to end a gangster film, but it's intimately connected with Cassavetes' own views on the sources of creativity, on finding one's level and

on living with the pressures of time, the demands either to be or to become something: "There are certain rules and regulations that I think are set specifically to destroy the actor and make him feel uncomfortable..."; "I gain energy by being comfortable. I get drained when I'm uncomfortable".

Opening Night is an exploration of what it means to be uncomfortable in a part: Myrtle Gordon is finding it hard to play the role of an older woman in a play that has been written by a woman (Joan Blondell) who is somewhat older than she is. What complicates her rejection of the role is the fact that Myrtle, like every Cassavetes performer, is having to deal with her own ageing, with what it means in terms of her ability to feel passion in her private life as well as her fear of being typecast professionally.

Like *Shadows*, *Opening Night* is full of scenes of auditions and rehearsals, try-outs and attempts to find a 'comfortable' reality. But stylistically, it is the least like *Shadows* of all Cassavetes' films: it is shot almost in tableaux, characters as masks isolated within the red plush depths of the stage, against the darkened background of the auditorium, or within the equally anonymous spaces of 'private' apartments. Not since *Too Late Blues*, in fact, had Cassavetes adopted a style which so strikingly framed and 'placed' the actor. In the earlier film, Hollywood cameraman Lionel Lindon (who also worked on Cassavetes' TV show *Johnny Staccato*) composed scenes in depth: a choreographed flux of faces, bodies, glances, shifting alliances and fluctuating attachments. Thematically, the link with *Shadows* is clear, but visually and dramatically the effect could be called Wellesian.

Other stylistic connections spring to mind: *Faces* is hysterical Antonioni; *Opening Night* is Visconti in out-of-town try-outs. It is ironic – but in the end not surprising – that Cassavetes, who privileged the actor over cinema, who attacked the cinema with the tools of all his other trades, should have encompassed so much of it, should have made contact, consciously or not, with so many other practitioners. Apart from the growing list of directors who are now claimed as his beneficiaries, there are also those films in which Cassavetes appeared for other directors, which could also open out into unique examples of Cassavetes' cinema. There is, for instance, his role as the husband in *Rosemary's Baby*, where he gives a particular reality to the witchcraft plot as he skulks, shamefacedly, on edges of the coven, an actor trying to make himself comfortable with the fact that he has advanced his career by admitting the Devil to his wife's bed.

● Five films by John Cassavetes – *Shadows* (1959), *Faces* (1968), *A Woman Under the Influence* (1974), *The Killing of a Chinese Bookie* (1976) and *Opening Night* (1977) – will be on regional tour during April and May at the following venues: Bristol Watershed, Brixton Ritzy, Cardiff Chapter, Edinburgh Filmhouse, Glasgow Film Theatre, Leicester Phoenix, Manchester Cornerhouse, Nottingham Broadway. The films will also be available on video from Palace.

The sounds of jazz in Cassavetes' films and its combination with other music is explored by Brian Priestley

Beating time

Even the absence of music was significant in John Cassavetes' work. In the 50s, after all, masters of the melodramatic soundtrack such as Max Steiner and Dmitri Tiomkin were, if perhaps past their peak, still holding sway in Hollywood with an army of active acolytes like Alfred Newman and Elmer Bernstein, with young André Previn coming up behind. Given the large ensembles these composers used to write for, of course, a small independent production would have pressing budgetary reasons for avoiding such specially crafted works. But any amateur film-maker with a desire for that style of schmaltz would have easy access to library music produced for radio stations, as freely available (and about as creative) as sound-effects records. Cassavetes, on the other hand, was musically aware and therefore sensitive to the superiority of silence over second-rate sounds.

Night people

His specific interest in jazz is revealing of Cassavetes' artistic conflicts, and of his consequent difficulties with Hollywood. A late interview by Brian Case (*The Wire*, Summer 1984) contains the comment, "I've always been able to work with anybody that doesn't want success. Jazz musicians don't want success... They have these little tin weapons - they don't shoot, they don't go anywhere. The jazz musician doesn't deal with structured life - he just wants *that night*, like a kid".

There in a nutshell is the theme of *Too Late Blues*. If the director had had his way, this would have starred Montgomery Clift and Gena Rowlands in the Bobby Darin and Stella Stevens roles. Although one of his most commercialised films, it remains, in the words of David Meeker, "one of the most accurate Hollywood movies with a jazz background". It also remains his only film which is principally about music, and it features an excellent soundtrack group, handpicked by Cassavetes and including Benny Carter and Shelly Manne.

Shadows, however, is about lots of things - vulnerability, racial identities and, above all, New York City. The bassist and composer Charles Mingus, whose music already shared these same concerns, was a ready, willing and, potentially, highly suitable collaborator. But the film's financial constraints affected the provision of its music. Cassavetes completed the project with the aid of his salary from the television series *Johnny Staccato*, in which the eponymous detective's

distinguishing characteristic was that he was really a jazz pianist (what else?). The series was revived not long ago by ITV. The initial financing came from listeners' donations to Jean Shepherd's legendary, late-night radio talk show *Night People*, which earns a credit on the finished film and "raised seven grand in one-dollar bills", according to Brian Case. Shepherd, incidentally, took part in one of Charles Mingus' three albums of the period which combine music with the spoken word.

"When Charlie looked at part of the film on the movieola... The minute he saw the film, he could see the rhythms of the city and pick them up and play Ben Carruthers - the story's unemployed trumpet player - on the street", said Cassavetes. There is doubt as to how much of Mingus' music inspired by the film was actually recorded for use on the soundtrack, which includes excerpts from at least four different numbers performed by his ensemble. (It took until 1990 for one of these hitherto lost tracks to appear on record, as 'Untitled Percussion Composition', and happily in unedited form. But the album is incorrect in stating that the piece was not used in the film. Unhappily, the track is only available now within a boxed set of twelve CDs.)

There are conflicting theories about when these recordings took place (usually easily documented through the musicians being contracted via the union, so this was probably not the case). Cassavetes' recollections imply that the film was far from complete when Mingus became involved, but Cassavetes and one of the participating players are in agreement that the music written by Mingus was too difficult to record satisfactorily in the studio time that could be afforded. It may be that Mingus, who claimed to have done 'ghost-writing' for Dmitri Tiomkin (as the more senior Benny Carter certainly had), became infected at just the wrong moment with the Hollywood ideal of writing conventional music cues that were just right for the length of the scene, rather than

realising that Cassavetes could marry the two in the editing room.

The predominant impression, if one plays the soundtrack music in the mind's ear, is of the unaccompanied tenor saxophone, played by Mingus' then sideman Shafi Hadi. Cassavetes is specific that these segments were recorded "subsequently to the filming" but we are none the wiser as to how this was achieved. (Sadly, there is also doubt whether Hadi, who left the music business shortly after his association with Mingus, is still alive.) One well-known promotional still shows Cassavetes ecstatically gesticulating in the role of orchestral conductor with the solitary figure of Hadi looming out of focus and almost out of the frame. It is likely that the saxophonist watched the film being projected while he improvised (as Miles Davis did for Louis Malle's first feature *L'Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* at about the same time), but he may have been asked merely to create sounds matching various moods, which the director then shuffled around.

Crass pop

Either way, the decision about what music to place where in the final cut was clearly Cassavetes', and it is used with a rare spaciousness which adds an extra depth to the image (as Malle also commented about Davis' contribution to his film). It is carefully worked out, in a way doubtless first suggested by Mingus, in terms of musical motifs and textures identified with the story's themes or characters. Mingus' own double-bass repeatedly represents the streets of the city and the alienation of Ben; the drummer's tom-toms represent the insincere Tony; the saxophone is the world of emotions, and particularly those of Lelia. In deliberate contrast, there is considerable use of more or less crass pop music: Hugh's disastrous attempt at singing a Billy Eckstine blues; a dreadful song called 'Beautiful You' which is heard twice, as is the chorus line's 'A Pretty Girl is like a Melody'; so too is the mindless partying of 'normal' youngsters to a rendition of 'Hound Dog'. The only time Ben and

his cronies Dennis and Tom enter the world of this kind of music is when they serenade three girls with a take-off of the Inkspots; the tune of 'If I Didn't Care' is then distorted in Mingus' bass improvisation during the ensuing rumble with the girls' boyfriends, as though to say, "If you don't care, the reality of the streets gets you anyway".

There's less music, and certainly less of this sort of subtlety, in Cassavetes' later films, but there is a parallel use of irony in the closing sequence of *Faces*. At the end of a long movie full of fierce close-ups, loud dialogue and louder source music, husband and wife approach a silent, bruised realisation of what they're doing to each other, to the accompaniment of a specially composed song entitled 'Never Felt Like This Before'.

Artistic fury

A Woman Under the Influence is a more ambiguous work and such music as is used is carefully plotted. The basic contrast it highlights is between the narrow emotional world of Peter Falk's Italian-American sanitation worker and his racially mixed crew and the starved feelings of his wife (Gena Rowlands). She is seen choosing an operatic love duet to relax to and *Swan Lake* to dance to, while the episode of her being committed to a mental hospital is linked to the sentiments of 'La donna e mobile' from *Rigoletto*. The men contribute only brief bursts of melancholy pop and folk music - with the exception that one of Falk's colleagues (played by Hugh Hurd, the ineffectual blues singer from *Shadows*) suddenly and movingly 'goes against type' and serenades Rowlands with a tenor aria from *Aida*.

The original music created by Cassavetes' sound man Bo Harwood (also responsible, with assistance, for the music of *The Killing of a Chinese Bookie* and *Opening Night*) consists of an out-of-tune piano, sometimes accompanied by an untutored female voice. The only non-operatic instance of male and female voices coming together is the optimistic closing-title music for the piano and two kazooes.

Cassavetes apparently lived to regret the end title of *Shadows*, describing it as "an improvisation". Yet, as is also usually the case with jazz, there was agreement between director and actors as to the themes and their basic treatment, with the director having the final say as to the length and order of the scenes. Only in *Shadows* did Cassavetes seek a musical input from a bandleader who operated in the same way. Cassavetes' judgment on Mingus, and on himself, was "He was always torn between the two - the mathematical beauty of the composition and the freedom of improvisation. We had the same kind of artistic fury that hits you. You're all loose - well, we pretend we're loose and in the end we're dictators".



Ecstatic rhythms: John Cassavetes, Shafi Hadi

Almodóvar needs to be understood as a Spanish director who upsets Spanish conventions, argues Rikki Morgan

Dressed to kill

● With all the media hype, you could hardly fail to notice that 1992 is the 'Year of Spain'. And the face of Spanish cinema projected everywhere is Pedro Almodóvar's. So what makes Almodóvar the star of the European glossies and supplements? Perhaps because he's the king of media excess himself. Who else could grind the frantic Madrid traffic to a halt with a cavalcade of giant high-heeled shoes to mark the release of his latest film, *High Heels*, in October? Or maybe it's because he's the only Spanish film-maker of the moment to have won both critical attention and popular box office success on the international film circuit. "I'm the exception, so you shouldn't take my case as an example of Spanish cinema. It really takes a miracle to make a film in Spain. It's a miracle that Spanish cinema exists at all".

In his early days, Almodóvar was the notorious *enfant terrible* of the cult movie scene, with outrageously off-beat films like *Pepi, Luci, Bom and the Other Girls* (1980), *Labyrinth of Passions* (1982) and *Dark Habits* (1983), with their drugs, sex, role reversals and subversion of traditional institutions. Since then, his work has been slow to win the approval of the critical dinosaurs of his country – an institution which is reluctant to let go of notions of 'art' and 'entertainment'. However, the rapid growth of his commercial success indicates the enthusiasm of his audiences. "Criticism takes longer to change. The critics are a kind of dictatorship, yes, they are dictators... They change much more slowly than the public itself".

In Spain, the historical divisions between popular and 'high' culture that Almodóvar deliberately shuns were intensified by the manipulation of cinema in the Franco era. For years, popular entertainment was rewarded by government legislation for conforming to

those representations and myths which were the bedrock of the regime – the 'Franco mythology'. The result was escapist musical extravaganzas, pro-nationalist Civil War epics, religious dramas, and folkloric romances and comedies which upheld ultra-conservative moral values. Meanwhile, politically oppositional cinema was banned, mutilated by the censor or relegated to the arthouse *arte y ensayo* cinemas, where its audience would be small and its impact minimal. Almodóvar's films take an important step towards dismantling these historical associations of art cinema with quality and the popular with trivia and conservatism. "I think that kind of liberalisation, that lack of prejudice about what is understood by 'quality', 'trash', and so on, is something that has changed with time. And besides, the term 'trash' is used in a different way since the American 'underground' and all that. I think you can look at genre in a different way, without making those 'exquisite' divisions of art cinema, popular cinema and so on".

In a country where distribution and exhibition rights are monopolised by American products and interests, and where cultural colonisation is a growing threat, the Spanish identity of Almodóvar's films is refreshing. Catholicism, the family, emigration, the rural exodus and drug abuse all come into the firing line of his irreverent and transformative black humour. This anarchic brand of humour has a long Spanish pedigree, with roots that stretch from the roguery of the picaresque novels and satirical poetry of the Golden Age to the grotesque caricatures and distortions of Valle Inclán's *esperpentos*, a dramatic form of the 20s. Acerbic wit has always been a characteristic of the Spanish avant-garde, from the outrageous stunts of the Surrealists and Dadaists to the antics of the Madrid *movida* of the late 70s and early 80s. And there has always been a market for satirical magazines, even in the harshest years of the Franco regime.

Promiscuous cinema

The sources of Almodóvar's filmic language are refreshingly, often hilariously, eclectic, drawing on a range of references which demonstrate his indifference to distinctions of 'high' and 'low' art. Literary allusions range from Cocteau (*The Law of Desire*, 1987; *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, 1988) to García Lorca (Angel's Mother in *Matador*, 1986). Film sources include Bergman's *Autumn Sonata* (*High Heels*, 1991) and an insert from the high-drama romantic Western, *Duel in the Sun* (*Matador*). The critique of religion and the seamless transition from the real to the surreal within his films have been likened to the work of Luis Buñuel, while his children with paranormal or murderous tendencies (Patricia in *What Have I Done to Deserve This?*, 1984; Rebecca in *High Heels*) recall that series of sinister children in the New Spanish Cinema of the 70s, for instance in Carlos Saura's *Raise Ravens* (1975). "I'm clearly a kind of mirror, a mirror with a thousand faces, sometimes reflecting directly, sometimes in a distorted way, but reflecting everything around

me, my own experience, and my experience... is very, very varied".

The references are not only literary and cinematic. Almodóvar's films are littered with iconographic posters, photographs, comics, magazines, videos and other images which capture Madrid of the 80s and 90s with almost testimonial detail, while at the same time indulging his nostalgia for the formative images of the past through musical inserts of 40s-style *canción española* or Latin American rhythms. Like everything else in his films, this nostalgia is given a wry twist, as in the televised performance of *La bien pagá* in *What Have I Done to Deserve This?*, where transvestism subverts the traditional folkloric representation.

Problem child

In the media-dominated universe of Almodóvar's films, murder reports are read in the sensationalist crime rag *El caso* (*The Law of Desire*), prostitutes buy sado-masochistic *Lola* comics from the Sunday Rastro flea market (*What Have I Done...?*), nuns write pot-boilers (*Dark Habits*). Established media forms are hijacked to create bizarre reformulations: witty parodies of TV commercials advertise an unforgettable brand of coffee which leaves its victim scarred for life (*What Have I Done...?*); the miraculous properties of a washing powder are demonstrated through the laundry routine of a psychopath's mother (*Matador*). In *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* (1989), a send-up of public information slots promoting pension schemes debunks stereotypes of German efficiency and Spanish lethargy. And in *High Heels*, TV news presentation is stylised and burlesqued through the simultaneous signing for the deaf and Rebecca's 'confidential' on-air confession to the murder of her husband, bringing to mind recent debates about subjective and objective modes of news presentation stimulated by the style of US-inspired presenters like Jesús Hermida.

Despite occasional accusations of gratuitous and narratively unjustified sequences, Almodóvar defends the integral and reflective function of these elements, denying any suggestion of pretentiousness: "They don't appear as the tributes of a cinephile or with the distance of conducting a cultural exercise. They appear in a lively and active way, as part of the script. And that includes everything, from films I see to things I see in kiosks, picture stories, all those things that are called 'subgenre', everything – 'popular subgenre'... All the material is mixed and, well, that forms part of my character and I suppose it forms part of my style".

Almodóvar is as unprejudiced about the status of genres as he is about art and entertainment. In a spirit of eclecticism and disregard for conventional limitations, he creates highly individual hybrids of genre and style. The quirky mixture of realism and melodrama with touches of the paranormal in *What Have I Done...?* is treated with the same matter-of-fact equanimity as the *mélange* of high-drama thriller and humour in *The Law of Desire* or the melodrama of *High Heels*, with its interpolations of gaolyard musical dance sequences and



Women on the edge: Rebecca (Victoria Abril, foreground) with fellow-prisoner Chon (Bibi Andersson)

elements of farce. It is this mix of popular forms in conjunction with unorthodox subject material and characters that has made Almodóvar such a problem for the critical establishment – a position he undoubtedly enjoys.

His views on melodrama as an unjustly underrated popular form are particularly interesting, once more demonstrating his disdain for conventional thinking. Strongly associated with 'women's films', and consequently devalued, melodrama has only recently been reconsidered as a result of feminist attention. Almodóvar's reprise of the form is typical of his indifference to critical snobbery. "The melodramatic genre [was regarded] almost as a subgenre. It is recognised now that Douglas Sirk might be a genius, but it has always been rather undervalued, because the genre itself has many subdivisions – many of them damaging as well as pointless. So there's been a lot of misunderstanding around it".

Even Almodóvar's most realist film, *What Have I Done...?*, enjoys moments of melodrama, though dealing with a range of social issues in a working-class suburb typical of the 'dormitory towns' which have sprung up around Madrid from the 70s onwards. Almodóvar sees this kind of work "as a kind of melodrama with more humour, more related to Italian neorealism – because neorealism is a branch of melodrama with more social conscience, where filming takes place in the streets. There's a more naturalist tone, but it's still melodrama".

New families for old

Almodóvar's formal indifference is mirrored in his heterogeneous mix of subject matter and its treatment. Socially constructed norms of behaviour are ignored and replaced with unorthodox alternatives, while the overbear-

ing influence of institutions of authority (the Church, for example, in *The Law of Desire*, *Mata-dor*) is lampooned to the point of absurdity. Time and again he returns to family melodrama as both a narrative form and a thematic focus, a typical example of his characteristic disregard for critical and social propriety. His ambiguous position with regard to the family – an institution central to an understanding of Spanish society as a whole – informs his transformation of the genre: "There is a moment when the family is the main organ of repression. There's a kind of blackmail that only the family can exercise over you and it is more powerful than anything the whole of society can do to you. In all societies there have been families and I think the family is the most repressive invention that exists... But nevertheless, I have gradually discovered that psychologically the family occupies an inevitable and necessary place... I believe in clans and I believe we are capable of doing things for a brother or sister that we wouldn't do for anyone – things we wouldn't even consider".

Almodóvar resolves this contradiction by challenging the conventional family unit. The traditional mould is broken in all his films in one way or another, as he sets aside the middle-class paradigms which his nostalgia for the Hollywood melodramatic style might otherwise be expected to produce. Yet at the same time, he retains a strong sense of the supportive role his alternative families play.

The brother-sister relationship in *The Law of Desire* embraces issues of parenthood, sexual abuse, desire and transsexuality. In this unconventional family, the maternal role is taken on by Tina (Carmen Maura), whose on-screen transsexuality is juxtaposed with the well-known (to Spanish audiences) real life transsex-

uality of Bibi Andersson, who plays the 'natural' mother of Ada. Tina's homosexual brother assumes a paternal role, and this unorthodox family unit is presented as eminently more successful than the relationship between Ada and her natural mother.

Face of justice

In *High Heels*, Becky and Rebecca's mother-daughter relationship deals with issues of career-motherhood conflict and psychological rivalry. For Rebecca, the absence of her mother and her consequent desire for affection and attention motivate an emotional attachment which oscillates between obsession (with lesbian overtones) and psychotic rivalry, and results in two murders. Their investigation provides the framework for an attack on another age-old institution. Almodóvar's representation of justice rests on a recurrence of the motif of sexual ambiguity that runs through all his work, questioning the concepts of gender and sexuality which form the basis of patriarchal society. The judge is a deliberately equivocal character, appearing in various guises, including that of the transvestite cabaret artist, Letal. And yet for Almodóvar, sexuality and sexual orientation are not sources of ambiguity in themselves: "There is no ambiguity in that. However, for me there is ambiguity in justice – and that's why I have given it to the character of the judge. I don't know what the face of justice is – sometimes it's masculine, sometimes it's feminine – that is where ambiguity resides: in questions of morality".

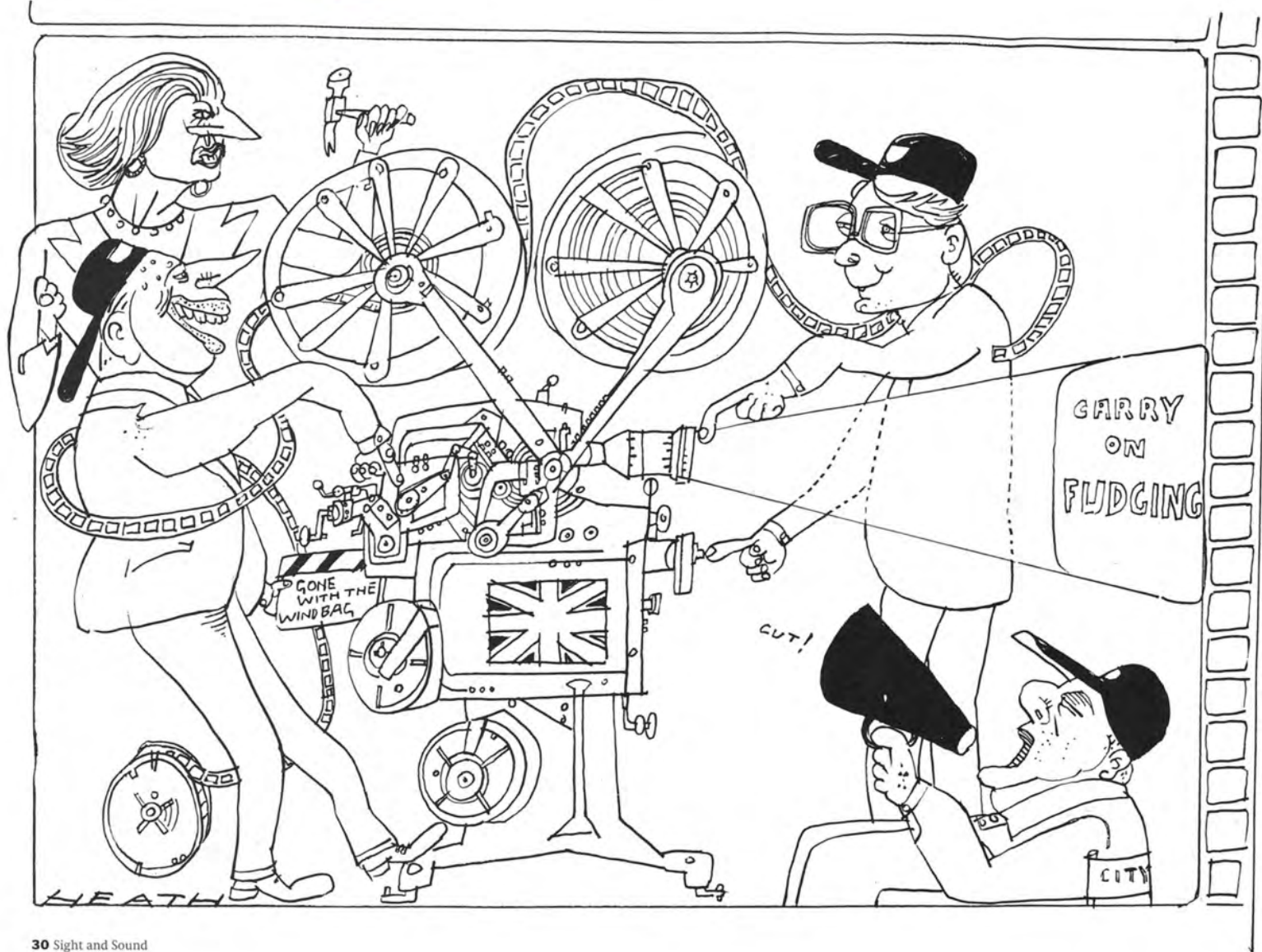
This normalisation of sexual fluidity and rejection of gender-based judgments is consistent with the formal fluidity and stylistic eclecticism Almodóvar's films celebrate. However, it does raise problems. His representation of women within this context of gender upheaval lays his work open to interpretations that range from the radical dissolution of gender-based assumptions to misogynistic provocation (most infamously in the resolution of *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!*, in which Marina ends up in a romantic idyll with the man who held her hostage). The high profile given to questions of gender and sexuality has also been devalued by sensationalist representation of Almodóvar in the media and promotion of his films. Nevertheless, this dimension of his work, taken in the context of his anarchic treatment of all aspects of form, style and subject matter, arguably makes him Spain's most interesting and controversial film-maker today.

Almodóvar is currently throwing himself into the gruelling round of promotional tours and media exposure with characteristic enthusiasm and inexhaustible energy, still finding time to work on new projects for the future: "Just doing promotion isn't enough. I need to have a living project in hand, otherwise I will like a plant!" Quite what the final product will be, he's never too sure – "After *High Heels*, I feel like, as we say in Spain – 'my body is demanding' another outrageous comedy..."

'High Heels' opens on 27 March and is reviewed on page 61 of this issue

With an election on 9 April, Peter Goodwin asks what's at stake for film and broadcasting. Plus Gordon Brown MP in interview

Future imperfect



Film policy

The film policy put forward by Britain's three main political parties seems to start from the same three premises: an acknowledgment of the virtual demise of British film production in the 80s, a recognition of the need to do something about this decline, and a reluctance to admit the word 'subsidy' into any solution.

Labour ought to have benefited from all this since it is under the Tories, after all, that the decline has occurred. Margaret Thatcher's only initiative was to host a Downing Street summit in June 1990. The summit delivered a £5 million European film co-production fund, the British Film Commission and some support for the EC Media '95 initiative, but not much else.

A working party was set up to examine structural reform of the industry, but it lost momentum, hampered by an unsympathetic Secretary for Industry and the interests of distributors and exhibitors in maintaining the status quo. Tax breaks for film were rejected in the 1991 budget.

Trying to gain the initiative, Labour last year launched a new arts and media policy with a section on film and a discussion paper on the industry produced by the office of shadow Secretary for Industry, Gordon Brown. This year Labour has published a full policy statement – *Film – Our Cultural Future*. But the Tories may have snatched some of Labour's limelight by introducing in this year's budget some of the tax breaks they rejected last year – though the measures were certainly less than many had expected or hoped for.

Sight and Sound asked Nigel Stafford-Clark, producer with Zenith Productions, and Lynda Myles, producer, to talk with Gordon Brown to find out exactly what Labour proposes for the film industry. And to discover how far a consensus may exist on film policy, we sounded out views from three other political perspectives: Eamonn Butler, director of radical right think-tank, the Adam Smith Institute; Liberal Democrat, John Mauger; and film-maker Marc Karlin, who has described himself as a "politically unaffiliated libertarian socialist".

Eamonn Butler

Director of the Adam Smith Institute

"The film production and distribution market is far from being a free market. You could argue that there are quite significant distortions. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission looked at the brewing industry, where the producers of beers also owned most of the pubs. There has also been debate about the motor industry, where dealerships tend to be owned or controlled by the producers. The government and the MMC think these operate against the public interest – they don't allow new entrants to gain access to the distribution chain very easily.

"The British film industry is saying the same about the access of British films into the film distribution network. The difference is that the distribution chains in this country tend to be owned by producers overseas, rather than pro-

ducers in Britain. That has been something of a blind spot with the MMC, but the argument seems to me the same. So I would not be surprised to see the government instructing the MMC to look at distribution and see whether it in fact operates towards the public interest – particularly whether it allows sufficient access for new and innovative British products into the distribution chain.

"There is a point about the taxation of actors. Under the Schedule E arrangements it is quite punitive for a big international star to come to this country to do six weeks' filming and then go away again. That means that a number of actors simply give up on Britain. That is entirely counterproductive. There is very little difficulty for the Inland Revenue to



make appropriate arrangements with overseas tax authorities so that if actors come to the UK they are taxed normally in their place of residence and then a subvention is made from the overseas tax authorities back to Britain. That could help attract filming from overseas.

"The government is not going to be very sympathetic to a film industry coming along and demanding special subsidies. What is of interest to politicians is some tax mechanism which will attract capital into investment in British industry generally. It ought to be cheaper for people with £50,000 to spare to put it into a British enterprise which generates jobs in Britain rather than into a time-share in the Algarve. Therefore one is looking for some general investment vehicle, that makes it easy for people to invest tax-efficiently".

John Mauger

Contributor on film to the Liberal Democrat Arts Green Paper

"We are proposing levies on the sale of film rights for television and on the sales of pre-recorded videotapes. That should raise a lot of money. As television is now the greatest outside user of films, and pays considerable sums in order to show a film, it should be levied on that. It also means that American films will pay a bit towards the British film industry.

"Our approach is to try to help an industry to help itself. We don't want to interfere. We have instead tried to propose alternatives to existing systems. An example is the leasing of

screens in arts houses to local cinemas. If the local arts house is in trouble, it seems to me a good idea to approach one of the local cinemas and say, how about a two-year lease? But that is only one possible suggestion. There is no one way forward.

"We do propose some tax incentives for production. We would hope that the government could underwrite the cost of a film – give it a loss guarantee. Another is to say that, in the case of film investment, a loss can be offset against profit on another production.

"We have no cultural strategy as such. It is up to people to decide on the films they want to make. The film industry is a commercial business, but from time to time it produces wonders which are works of art. But you can't stipulate that someone will make a cultural film – all you can do is give them the means to enable them to do so".

Marc Karlin

Film-maker with Lusita films

"You could fill a decent-sized library with all the papers that have been written on the sad state of the British film industry. You could also have a six-month season at the NFT consisting of all the films that have promised the new dawn of British cinema. And you could fill a decent-sized office block with companies that have announced that the British are coming. Neither plans, nor films, nor companies have ever gathered enough wind to put energy into that good old ship, the British film industry.

"What will be so different now? Would the measures proposed by the Labour party be deep and far-reaching enough to stave off short-term failure? By refusing to look at the underlying cultural causes of past failure, there is a great danger of failing once again. The key sentence in the Labour proposals is 'we do not believe there is a need for any substantial new mechanism in the UK; we have entrepreneurial and creative talent, the facilities and the commitment to make the industry successful and are certain that it has the potential to be as important to the UK economy as Hollywood is to the US exchequer'. If this potential has ever been there, one has to ask why it is that this entrepreneurial talent failed to see it, went abroad, or simply gave up.

"The need is right across the board. First to guarantee distribution to films made. In order to do that you have to get cinemas properly attuned. It needs a whole shift in the cultural, critical, distribution, exhibition departments. It is obvious that with the fragmenting of television, cinema is going to have an extraordinary new power of a collective enterprise again. That means cinemas have to be refurbished, tickets have to be subsidised by taking VAT off for a certain category of film that needs that sponsorship.

"There also have to be cultural animators: in your locality you advertise through trade unions, you go to pubs, you have got to start all over again. In other words, by enlivening the cultural life of cinema you are also taking care of the commerce. You can't split the two."

Two producers ask Gordon Brown MP – what is Labour's policy on film?

The shadow answers

Lynda Myles What are the key points about Labour's forthcoming proposals for the film industry?

Gordon Brown Labour has some specific proposals about film training. We have said that film exports would be a central part of our export drive and we are very interested in the European initiatives that are taking place. We also see investment as of prime importance and have major proposals in this area. The first is to encourage investment in film through our new growing businesses scheme, which would replace the business expansion scheme. The second is to look at the French Sofica scheme, which encourages companies to consider investing in film by making it attractive in taxation terms. These ideas have been discussed in two seminars, one in London, one in Scotland, and the response was encouraging. We have also said that we want to bring together all sides of the industry – exhibitors, distributors, the video industry, the television industry – to reach an agreement about what measures should be taken and what they can each contribute to a film production initiative.

Nigel Stafford-Clark Would you be prepared to use, as it were, the stick and carrot technique? To introduce certain tax measures to give distributors an incentive to channel part of their revenue into film, but at the same time to make it clear that if they don't do this you might be forced to take statutory measures to achieve that end?

GB As I understand it, the policy of the current Department of Trade and Industry (and indeed the past Prime Minister) is to look to the various sections of the industry to reach some sort of agreement among themselves, with the idea that if they fail there will be no government intervention. We would want to bring the industry together in a more serious way, rather than with this half-hearted feeling that if you don't bother turning up, it doesn't matter.

NSC Until now we have always had a solid infrastructure of film technicians and facilities which has attracted the US majors to make their films here. The danger is that when you fall below a certain level of production, especially if you are not supporting training, then

the new generation of technicians and facilities will not be there. Obviously any film policy has to deal with two areas: indigenous film production and the attraction of Britain as a site for film-making from elsewhere.

GB I find it depressing to see the dramatic fall in US film investment in Britain over the past few years. Yet at the same time there has been a great explosion of talent, not just in production, but in film-making, screenwriting and so on. The danger is that this will be lost because we will fall below a critical mass beneath which the British film industry cannot begin to expand again. We are certainly determined that this shouldn't be allowed to happen.

Training is obviously important and Tony Blair, our employment spokesman, is taking the proposals for initiatives in the film industry very seriously. And then there is the idea of a European film school located in Britain, which we are excited about. Once the films are produced, I think we could do a lot more to sell them abroad. We certainly need to be far more a part of the European scene – even now, the proportion of British film earnings in Europe is a lot higher than it was a few years ago: about 30 per cent, I believe. However, for us, the crucial area is investment in Britain, and it is here that we have to make advances through government initiatives from both the Treasury and the DTI.

NSC Would you also look at the French model? Overall in the French model, there are three tiers: tax incentives for outside investors; ploughing more money from the industry back in; and the creation of a film fund. In the French case, this is done through levies or taxes on television revenue and cinema tickets. When you look at the extraordinary success of British Screen in using the puny amount of money they have been given (£1.5 million a year from the government) as the basis to finance fifty-five films over five years whose total budget comes to five, six, seven times that amount, then the creation of a film fund which acts as a leverage device to make films happen seems important. Obviously to create a film fund you have to get the money from somewhere, and there are two areas. The first is something that we have been talking about within the working party: the idea of placing a small surcharge on blank tapes. The other thing you might consider is television. I know that the Labour party has been very outspoken in its opposition to the C3 licence auction, and one of the things that has become apparent is that on the most optimistic assumption, from the ITC's point of view, the Treasury will gain only £40 million a year over and above what it would have been getting anyway. And as what it is getting already turned out to be so much that the Treasury itself decided to cut it back for next year, I think one can assume that it doesn't need all that money, especially as in terms of overall government spending, £40 million buys you very little. If you were to say

that you were going to take 50 per cent of that extra – say, £20 million a year – from the cash bid and divert it into a film fund you would create a significant amount of money each year.

GB These are interesting proposals, and we are certainly open to a discussion on the video levy. As far as your proposal about the C3 licences is concerned, ironically this would lay both you and us open to having a vested interest in the continuation of a system most of us have condemned. There is also a problem about earmarking particular sums of money that come into the Treasury; I wouldn't like the future of the film industry to rest on that sort of hijacked revenue. On the other hand, there are a number of players who ought to have an interest in a thriving and developing British film industry, and who might be encouraged by a number of different initiatives to make a far bigger contribution.

NSC Obviously you are not going to want to commit yourself to anything specific here. But would you at least commit yourself in principle to some form of government funding?

GB By encouraging investment through these incentives that is exactly what we are doing. And of course we would be very enthusiastic about British Screen.

LM Would you join Eurimages – the Council of Europe production support scheme? It seems extraordinary that Poland and Hungary have joined and we haven't.

GB I think we have said in our discussion document that we are enthusiastic about that and other initiatives in Media '95. Unlike the present government, we recognise that there are great opportunities for us in Europe, particularly in co-production.

NSC Film is important to both culture and commerce. At the moment it comes under the DTI, which tends to dwell only on its commercial importance, and we have been told very firmly in the working party that at the mention of culture the gun will be drawn. At the other end of the spectrum is the idea of mov-

Gordon Brown:
incentives to
encourage creativity



ing the film industry into the arts ministry, which will give rise to the problem of what happens to the commercial end – the distributors, exhibitors and so on. Have you thought about ways in which these two elements of the film business can be drawn together?

GB This government may be keeping film within the DTI, but then there's no guarantee that they're going to keep the DTI, or at least that's the latest rumour. We know that film covers different ministries and want to see it far better co-ordinated. But could we talk for a moment about some recent films: Lynda, how was *The Commitments* financed?

LM We couldn't get a penny of development from Britain, we were turned down by everyone we spoke to, so we raised the money privately and paid for it ourselves. When Alan Parker got involved we were immediately offered finance from the US and because we had had no encouragement here we went for it. I haven't yet gone public on this because it's not helpful to the industry, but I find it sad to hear Barry Norman on television saying what a pity it isn't a British movie. I've been talking to various figures in the French industry in the last two weeks and one of the reasons they have an industry is that they keep their directors. Our directors make one movie here and then because they can't get access to bigger budgets they are off to the US.

NSC You can't blame them. Twice in the last couple of years we made a film with a young director, their first film. The film is successful and immediately the Americans offer not only more money, but the opportunity to make more films. As one of them said to me, "as a director in Los Angeles I'm talking about five or six films, any one of which I could make. In Britain I'd be talking about one film which if I'm lucky I'll get to make in two years".

LM Critical mass again. You were very supportive about how it might work in Britain in general; what are the possibilities for Scotland and other regions?

GB The film paper we have introduced and on which we are inviting comments has a regional dimension. We think that is very important. We had one of our seminars in Scotland and there was a very positive response. I see the Scottish Development Agency and other regional development agencies working with venture capital funds to develop aspects of the industry: in Scotland there are already Scottish Screen locations and other initiatives.

WS You said in your introduction to the London discussion of your paper that you saw the next industrial revolution as being one of intellect and capacity. Is that exemplified by the film industry?

GB We are talking about the success of individual countries who increasingly depend not on where they are situated or the raw materials they have, or a single invention, but on the creativity of their people. And I think creativity is central to the success of the film industry.

Broadcasting policy

Thirteen years of Tory rule have shifted the political agenda on broadcasting, but not totally transformed it. The Thatcher government made at least two false starts: first, it got enthusiastic about the prospects of an entertainment-led cabling of Britain with all sorts of economic spin-offs; next it toyed with putting advertising on the BBC and set up the Peacock Committee to explore the idea. The spread of cable in Britain has been painfully slow, and the committee killed the notion of advertising on the BBC with the discovery that there wasn't the revenue to sustain it. But what Peacock did was to move the climate of discussion over to a more market-oriented perspective.

It was only with the publication of the broadcasting White Paper in 1988 that the Tories arrived at serious changes they were prepared to see through. The Paper dominated debate for the next three years, but because the Broadcasting Act that came out of it was mainly about the commercial side, the future of the BBC was put on hold.

The big issue to come out of the White Paper was, of course, the ITV licence auction, which had few friends outside Tory ranks and a good number of faint hearts inside. Its immediate impact was softened considerably, both by changes made during the passage of the bill



through parliament, and by the ITC pushing to the limits the discretion it was given.

Whether this will be enough to do more than postpone the dire consequences originally predicted remains to be seen. What is fairly certain, however, is that there will be little rush to rewrite the legislation governing ITV. The Tories certainly aren't going to change it, and despite its hostility to the process from the beginning, Labour has made it clear that it feels commercial television has been destabilised enough.

The BBC's charter is up for renewal in 1996, and the corporation is already working out its own case. This, with characteristic diplomacy, it will not publish until after the election. The Tories give changing signals as to what they might do. Under Thatcher, a major assault on the corporation might have been expected, but after the miserable experience of the Broadcasting Act, enthusiasm for major change

seems to have waned. Only a few weeks ago, however, Kenneth Baker raised the odds again, resurrecting, surprisingly, the idea of advertising. The public stand of both Labour and the Liberal Democrats is firmly in favour of maintaining a BBC very much like the one we have today. Indications as to what changes, if any, they would make have been sketchy.

To sample some of the options for the future of the BBC, *Sight and Sound* talked to broadcasting specialists from across the political spectrum: Tory backbencher and television producer/director by trade, Roger Gale; Stuart Hood, former controller of BBC television but approaching the question from a socialist perspective to the left of the Labour party; Liberal Democrat, Professor Brian Groombridge; Cento Veljanovski, media consultant and fellow of the free market think-tank, the Institute of Economic Affairs; and Labour's front bench spokesman on broadcasting, Robin Corbett.

Roger Gale

Chairman of the Conservative backbench media committee

"It's not a question of what we, or anyone else, would do with the BBC. It's more a question of how the BBC's future can be seen in the light of all the other developments in broadcasting – satellite, cable, multi-channel broadcasting. In that context, it is neither sustainable, nor will it be seen to be desirable, to have two national channels of public service television and the existing number of radio outlets.

"If we want to see a continuation of public service broadcasting funded by, for example, the licence fee, we have to look at what the public requirement will be. I can see a requirement for a distillation of the best of BBC 1 and 2 into one national television channel, with one national radio channel – probably Radio 4 – and then a BBC bi-media channel providing a series of local radio and television outlets, using bi-media reporters covering for both. The rest probably should be handled by commercial television and radio.

"I would like to see the single national BBC channel as broadbased. It's not a question of producing an intellectual ghetto, but having said that, there are, for example, game shows that frankly the BBC could do without. They are provided with adequate banality by other people. It will also not be necessary for them to cover every sporting event in quite the way they do at the moment when we have possibly four dedicated sports channels available by subscription.

"I am not averse to television by licence fee and I think the BBC has got to have a guaranteed financial base. What I am not prepared to see is an ever-escalating fee, for ever-escalating empire building, at a time when other people are going to be providing bits of the service. Once we have dedicated education services, religious services, weather, news, sport, you name it, the BBC's job as a public service will be to provide a mix of programmes for those who can't or don't want to subscribe individually to all the other things".

Stuart Hood

Former controller of BBC television

"There are two main issues. First, how is the BBC going to be funded? And second, how is it going to be governed and what is its relationship to the government and state?"

"On the first, I have come round to the view that the licence fee is probably the least worst system, though pensioners and so on should get rebates. The governance of the BBC is a more difficult question. The role of the governors should be looked at again. How are they appointed? Who do they represent? The board of governors ought no longer to have the power over policy which it has at present. It should be something which is interposed between government and the organisation. The governors themselves have never been representative of anything but a very small band of society and I would like to see some system whereby they are appointed by bodies which are defined as having a right to have representation on the board of governors – trade unions, churches, youth organisations, citizens' organisations. The BBC has got to provide space for more voices than it at present gives. It has got to come off the idea that there is some sort of natural consensus. It ought to widen the spectrum of views represented. And those views should not be mediated to the extent that they are today.

"I tend to agree with some of the people in the commercial set-up who think that unless you have competition across the whole range from the BBC, there will be a rush downhill into ratings by commercial television. One has to see the whole thing as part of a public service in which the BBC has a part to play. The BBC needs to compete across the spectrum in order to maintain standards".

Brian Groombridge

Chairman of the Liberal Democrat working group on arts policy

"The recent debate, even at its best, tended to focus on the question of quality, as though the main issue was how to get the best programmes. We wanted to ask a more fundamental question: what is broadcasting for? Different countries at different times have given different answers. In some cases broadcasting has been the voice of the state, in others it has been to do with selling goods, in others it has been to do with the development of civil society. For all its strengths and weaknesses, our broadcasting system has been in the last category.

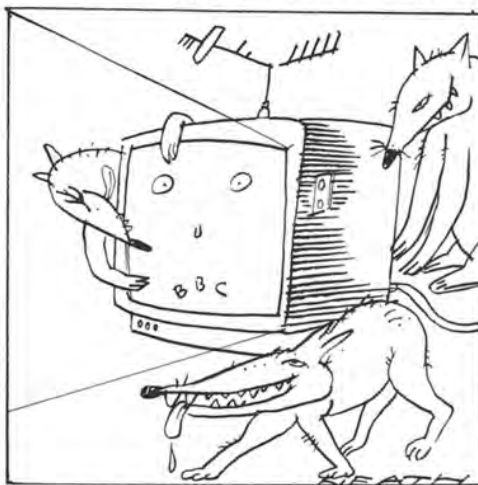
"It is this tradition that we feel has been badly threatened by the recent Broadcasting Act. Just because there is a strong thrust in broadcasting worldwide to put it at the service of the advertisers or the market doesn't mean that governments have to go along with it.

"We regard the BBC as the cornerstone of public service broadcasting. But you can no longer use the phrase 'public service broadcasting' as a self-explanatory incantation. That time has past. Our society is a particular kind of democracy, a particular kind of multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-valued society. We

must have a major broadcasting institution which is capable of reflecting this diversity.

"We are wholly opposed to the fragmentation of the BBC into those bits which allegedly could pay for themselves and those which could not. I would not wish personally to go to the wall in defence of Radio 2, for example, which even people in the BBC would say was due for a rethink. But the principle that different channels, representing different tastes, should continue is very important. The BBC must not be saddled with a definition of public service which means elite or something which the market can't pay for. The idea of selling off Radio 1, for example, is totally crazy.

"The governors are no longer regarded as the impartial representatives of the public



interest. It is no longer enough to call for a more sensitive approach by government; we need a more democratic system. But to get imagination and innovation people have to be hand-picked. If you had a comprehensive Ministry of Arts and Communication, as we propose, you would have a parliamentary select committee. That committee could refer back nominations if it felt that these people were placemen or that the total package was not sufficiently adventurous or responsive to important trends in contemporary society".

Cento Veljanovski

Senior research fellow of the Institute for Economic Affairs

"The whole question of why we need a BBC and what are the objectives of public service broadcasting has to be asked. We have the bizarre situation of a commercial organisation, Channel 4, acting as if it were a public service channel. And we have the BBC with one channel, BBC1, which effectively acts as if it were an advertiser-supported channel. I have proposed in the past that the remits be swapped so that public service would be entirely within the BBC. That would have introduced genuine competition into the system without changing the mix of programming. It was an intellectually neat way of doing things – but no one liked it!

"I don't see why the BBC should have two channels and think it should be slimmed down. A lot of things that the commercial sector can do should be taken out of the BBC and it should be required to provide a comple-

mentary schedule with complementary programmes to the commercial sector. A basic problem in the debate has been the confusing of organisations with public service broadcasting as a concept. You could have a situation where a public service commission was established that funded public service broadcasting that was shown across all the channels. It has gone largely unnoticed, but the Gaelic Television Fund has effectively done that.

"The BBC is now having something of a crisis of identity. With satellite channels showing twenty-four-hour news, sport, children's programming and nature programming on Discovery, the BBC can no longer argue that it is providing something that would not be provided in a commercial environment.

"But on a practical policy level, we are all locked in now. That is why nothing radical will happen to the BBC. In order to change the BBC in a radical way you would have to overhaul the whole of broadcasting again. With the bids having been put in for Channel 3, it is very dangerous to do more than tinker with the BBC. If you take away BBC 1 and make it commercial, then you would have to reconsider the whole of Channel 4 and ITV".

Robin Corbett

Labour shadow broadcasting minister

"We are going to set up an inquiry into the future of the BBC. We would want real people on it, able to listen. The inquiry will tour the country to find out from viewers and listeners what they want the BBC to be in the last years of this century and into the next. It will report back within a year and make recommendations which will be considered against the background that we want the BBC to be big, buoyant and confident, to retain and expand its role in public service broadcasting, to enable more voices and views to be heard and seen, and to have sufficient funds to carry out that role. The enormous strength of the BBC is precisely the range and scope of its programming and its offscreen activities. Though having said that, there is certainly scope for development in some of its local services, especially on the radio side.

"We have seen what the accountants do to television services in places like France, Italy and Australia. The fact is that if you want a wide-ranging, innovative, quality broadcasting service, that will only be provided in the public sector. I have just written to Michael Checkland about job cuts and so-called producer choice, which could well lead to 50 per cent of BBC television production being made externally. I cannot understand why the BBC should make these kinds of moves prior to the public debate about the renewal of its charter. This raises doubts about the BBC's ability and, dare I say it, its wish to preserve the staff and facilities it needs to fulfil its responsibilities.

"We have said that the appointment of governors of the BBC will be subject to scrutiny by parliamentary committee. The role that the governors play is at present left far too much to individual whim".

Out of hunger

We grew up in Guyana in an environment hostile to Indian culture. Over half the population was of Indian origin, the descendants of indentured labourers shipped to Caribbean plantations from 1838 onwards, many of them fleeing from famine in India. Defined by British colonial law as 'pagans', these Indians were immediately subjected to proselytising by Christian missionaries. Over the decades many changed from being Hindu or Muslim to being Presbyterians, Catholics, Methodists and Anglicans.

The Guyanese blacks, the descendants of African slaves, had already been transformed into a sub-species of the British race. They had retained very little of their original languages, religions or social customs. These had been beaten out of them. Black leaders, artists and intellectuals in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries almost wholly mimicked Western culture. They despised the Indians who landed in their midst. They preached the virtues of creolisation, which in reality meant eradication of Indian traditions.

Before long, Indian leaders were sporting cravats in the cane fields and talking as if they had swallowed whole the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The common Indians, realising that mimicry of Western education was one of the few means of escape from the plantation, beat their children to learn English and to take on English manners. We developed a public shame for things Indian, whether dressing in sari, eating curry with our fingers, or shaving our heads when our parents died. And yet throughout this process of 'creolisation', all of us retained in our imaginations a romantic image of our ancestral homeland, India.

In the twentieth century, this pride was sustained almost wholly by Indian films. Some enterprising Indian trader made it possible for the latest Bombay movies to be distributed widely in the colony. Here were images of princely opulence, ravishing music, colourful dances, sumptuous women and handsome heroes. The fair-skinned complexion of the leading characters unconsciously reinforced an Indian sense of Aryanness which distinguished us from the blacks and put us on a par with the whites.

This ethnic security was demolished in the late 60s when Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali* was screened privately in Guyana. I was about ten years of age, but even now I can remember the shock of the film, not only in my own mind but in that of my parents. For the first time we were seeing dismal pictures of India, and the pictures mirrored our own impoverished lives in Guyana. It was appalling to recognise parallels between our condition and that of Ray's villagers. Ray represented India as desperately malnourished. To be Indian was to want food. In a film of 115 minutes, every other episode seemed to be con-

Remembering the shock of first seeing a Satyajit Ray film in Guyana when he was a child, poet and novelist David Dabydeen reflects on what makes Ray a distinctively Indian film-maker

cerned with eating. (I have since counted forty-seven incidents in the film that revolve around food.)

In Guyana at the time, we were in the grip of a drought and food was hard to come by. A few years earlier, Afro-Indian conflict had resulted in food shortages, and many of us became beggars overnight, queuing up with our bowls at United Nations mission stations. *Pather Panchali* robbed us of the solace of the Bombay movies, with their scenes of lavish banqueting and general plenty. We were, after all, no better than the blacks, and desperately inferior to the Westerners who manned the UN emergency food stations with such gentleness and charity.

Twenty years later, living in England where food is not a priority, I can watch Ray's film and savour the malnourishment from a safe distance. Trained to mimic white scholarship, I can look for other things in the film: its formal brilliance, for instance. Take the famous train scene, the subtle series of intercutting by which the death of superannuated Auntie is juxtaposed with the children's awareness of a world outside the confines of the village, a world of technological and scientific power. Any simple contrast between the backwardness and progress is undercut, however, by the image of Apu enveloped in magical, feathery grass as he runs towards the blackening smoke and inhuman noise of the train.

Pather Panchali is constructed on such ambivalences, and scholars have written extensively on the complex camerawork and editing techniques that reveal Ray's genius as a film-maker. They've also illuminated concerns in Ray's work which echo present-day Western preoccupations – the criticism he offers, for instance, of the servitude of women – a radical departure for an Indian film-maker in the 50s. Western critics keep emphasising the 'universality' of Ray's art. "Ray's gifts of the

portrayer of the commonality which underlies human behaviour in different cultures have been a great help to me here", one scholar writes in excusing his lack of effort in learning Bengali while still justifying his authoritative reading of Ray's work. Another starts his study by raising a question about the "accessibility of Ray's films for Western audiences" and 'solves' it with traditional condescension: "when a specific cultural peculiarity does play a part in the narrative it becomes evident that the attitude to it encouraged by the film as a whole is not all that far removed from our own".

I am grateful to Western critics for taking the trouble to write extensively on Ray and for attempting intellectual understanding of his work, but I wish they would respect rather than excuse Indian specificities. Ray didn't make films to echo or mimic Western concerns. He made *Pather Panchali* out of Indian hunger. It's astonishing to think that he had never made a film before, nor had his cameraman any experience except as a stills photographer. They had an obsession but no money. Ray pawned his books, his records and his wife's bangles to shoot the train scene (4,000 feet of footage), not even knowing whether he would locate enough money to make the whole film. Eventually, Ray's mother got the chief minister of Bengal to put up government money in return for sole ownership. *Pather Panchali* (*Song of the Little Road*) was funded by the West Bengal Government Committee for Road Improvement (the Committee probably didn't see the train scene, otherwise they would have declined to pay).

Out of hunger, Ray produced an Indian masterpiece. It was the same hunger out of which Naipaul, Selvon and other Indians in the Caribbean created. In so doing, they wrote themselves, and the rest of us Indians, out of a hunger that once threatened us with chronic beggary or mimicry.



'Pather Panchali': born out of poverty and need

NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE

Tarnished angels



Trouble-makers:
Marlene Dietrich in
'Blonde Venus', left,
and Barbara Stanwyck
in 'Baby Face', right

Annette Kuhn

The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film, 1928-1942

Lea Jacobs, University of Wisconsin Press, £13.50, 202pp

In April 1933, the New York state board of censors rejected the Warner Bros film *Baby Face*. Its tricky subject matter – a woman's rise up the social ladder via sexual exploitation of men – had already, at script stage, elicited concern from the Studio Relations Committee, the department of the Motion Pictures Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) responsible for the Production Code. The SRC had stipulated that the nature of the heroine's relations with her various lovers should not be made explicit, and in particular that no exchanges of cash or gifts in return for sex should be shown. More specifically, Warners had been asked to extend the gaps in the narrative covering sexual encounters. At this point, the film's ending had the heroine losing the man she married, but keeping his money. Censorship – or rather industry self-regulation – had ensured that potentially 'offensive' material was excised, yet at the same time referred to by its very absence; and that moral values were upheld (to a certain degree) by the ending.

The New York censors' ban on this version of *Baby Face* coincided with acute fiscal crisis in the US film industry, as well as with moral panics about the ill effects of the movies, especially on young people. In the previous month Will Hays had told the MPPDA that producers must put their house in order. The institutional changes which culminated the following year in the setting up of the Production Code Administration had been put in motion,

Baby Face, caught on the cusp of two regimes of self-regulation, was subjected to changes in content after its completion and release, changes unprecedentedly instigated by the MPPDA itself (its objective was to protect the industry's reputation and its members' investments precisely by forestalling such post-production censorship). A 'voice of morality' was inserted, and a new ending added in which the heroine kept her husband but lost the fortune.

The *Baby Face* story is perhaps the most spectacular of Lea Jacobs' six case studies of 'fallen woman' films (she also discusses *The Easiest Way*, MGM, 1931; *Blonde Venus*, Paramount, 1932; *Anna Karenina*, MGM, 1935; *Stella Dallas*, Goldwyn/UA, 1937; and *Kitty Foyle*, RKO, 1940). These films' engagement with notions of 'proper' femininity and the boundaries of female sexual behaviour tested the limits of Hollywood's practices of self-regulation. They proved both troublesome, because of their subject matter, and irresistible, because their delight in glamour, display and consumerism – through lavish sets and costumes, for example – appealed to female audiences. Jacobs argues (the *Baby Face* case notwithstanding) that self-regulation was a matter of negotiation rather than prohibition, organised as much to benefit the industry as in response to external pressure, taking issue with those histories which accord the Catholic League of Decency a leading role in Hollywood's post-1934 self-regulation procedures. She goes on to show how industry self-regulation played a part in constructing and perpetuating the narrative models now associated with classical Hollywood cinema.

Jacobs' attention to the interaction of a range of textual and institutional prac-

tices, her careful use of historical source materials, her engagement with debates on femininity and its representations in classical cinema, and her subtle – and highly accessible – interweaving of the complex strands of a fascinating story, make her book an exemplary addition to 'new' film history. Aside from its scholarly soundness, Jacobs' method of selection yields some interesting findings. The six 'limit case' movies were taken from an initial sample of a hundred made between 1929 and 1942, and her final choice was guided by the films' treatment by the SRC/PCA as evidenced in the MPPDA's case files of documents relating to the regulation of films' contents at all stages prior to and during production.

Close study of the movies in conjunction with their case files reveals that the relative sexual explicitness of the fallen woman film of the early 30s was less a result of pre-PCA laxity than of regulation procedures themselves, which, by encouraging covert references to what could not be shown, were instrumental in producing 'explicitness'. In the later years of the decade, it seems, rather than focusing on story endings and specific moments, regulation was targeted more systematically at mechanisms of plot and narration. Kitty Foyle's flashback structure, for instance, lets us know from the start that the heroine has been punished for her sexual transgression; the 'voice of morality', instead of being tacked on at the end, pervades the story.

The Wages of Sin is a fine addition to the social history of cinema and to feminist film scholarship. Not only does it deepen and nuance our grasp of the inner workings of the Hollywood studio system, but it also enhances our understanding of the ways in which, consciously and unconsciously, the institutions and texts constituting that system drew upon, transformed, produced – and yet sometimes could do no more than gesture helplessly towards the contradictions of – wider social attitudes. As a contribution to the broader debate around censorship and female sexuality, Jacobs' work suggests that the key issue is not really censorship or no censorship, nor even more or less permissive regimes of censorship, but forms and practices of censorship and regulation themselves, how they change, and what effects they produce.

Reel changes

James Donald

The Movie That Changed My Life

David Rosenberg (ed), Viking, \$21.95, 304pp

Inviting a group of novelists, poets and academics to write about personally seminal films sounds a little too much like *Readers' Digest* for comfort. As an idea for a party game, though, it is irresistible. Which movie changed *your* life? Initially blank, I eventually dredged up a childhood dream. Two men in naval uniform, one with an arm in a sling, go down ►



◀ into a Paris Metro station and walk along its tiled subways. In a morgue-like room, they lift the sheet on a slab. Cut to the point of view of the corpse, who is, of course, me. Years later, when I again saw Ronald Neame's 1955 *The Man Who Never Was*, I realised that my dream was a bricolage of reworked scenes from the film.

What is the significance of such recollections? Yale critic Geoffrey Hartman gets it about right: "Although no movie ever changed my life, the first one I saw remains a distinct screen memory". He writes not about that, however, but in more conventional critical mode about the wonderful world of Buñuel's *The Exterminating Angel*. That's a pity, because the most interesting aspect of this collection is its attempt to find a language in which to articulate the *experience* of cinema and the role played by the *memory* of film in our subjective life.

One recurrent image is that described by Joyce Carol Oates when she recalls her experience of viewing Tod Browning's *Dracula* as "the communal awe of the darkened, hushed, churchlike movie theatre, especially those movie theatres of old, which seemed to us places of legitimate wonder". This nostalgia tends to become cloying; I found that a little mourning for the passing of childhood innocence in the lost picture shows of small-town America goes a long way.

More provocative is the manner in which, reviewing their selections today, the contributors explore how we creatively misremember movies, reanimating their imagery with our own desires and anxieties. (It is perhaps significant that the book's editor, David Rosenberg, has collaborated here with Harold Bloom, author of *A Map of Misreading*. Bloom's own offering is a characteristically witty and slightly wacky comparison of W. C. Fields' *The Fatal Glass of Beer* with Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* as dramas of outrage.)

Jayne Anne Phillips, for example, is surprised that Corman's *Premature Burial* stars Ray Milland and not the Vincent Price of her memory. But that is by the by. What is important is that images in such cheapie Edgar Allan Poe adaptations offered "haunting, inverted metaphors of things that were too frightening to think about as a child" – the break-up of her parents' marriage and the death of her mother. For Bharati Mukherjee in the Calcutta of the 50s, Doris Day and the US she embodied "guaranteed us women who fancied ourselves talented extraordinary absolution". For David Bradley, coming across Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* in bizarre circumstances provoked in him a youthful rage undimmed by time or aesthetics. And for Meg Wolitzer, that old misogynist Hitchcock managed in *Shadow of a Doubt* to distil the "uneasy combination of fantasy and timidity" that is "the female adolescent experience".

Although its subject is film, the book's tone is almost aggressively literary. Too many contributors defensively insist that it's *books* that changed their life. They often find it difficult to write about film itself – there's a good deal of plot sum-

mary but disappointingly little on the seductions of image, sound and *mise en scène*. There is also a tendency to politically correct revisionism: Russell Banks ruefully denounces his beloved *Bambi* as high-grade agitprop for a sexual stereotyping which destroyed the Eden of his infancy.

But however impressionistic and sometimes irritating it may be, *The Movie That Changed My Life* tackles an important, neglected issue. In contrast to those 'How I got into the movies' stories, this book tells how the movies got into us.

As an adolescent, I had another cinematic dream. The content is lost. But I vividly recall my shocked fascination as the dream ended and credits started to roll; my life had become the movie.

Seeing things

Yvonne Tasker

How Do I Look?: Queer Film and Video
Bad Object-Choices (eds), Bay Press,
\$16.95, 294pp

The starting point for this new collection of writings is the power, pleasures and perils of looking and being looked at, of visibility and invisibility. *How Do I Look?* is the book of a conference on lesbian and gay film and video which the editorial group, calling themselves Bad Object-Choices, organised in New York in 1989. The collection includes both formal papers and responses from conference participants, a format which allows the play of ideas across a variety of critical arenas. This relatively fluid structure is well suited to the different roles that a book on queer film and video has to enact at this time.

Both Judith Mayne and Teresa de Lauretis situate their essays at a tangent to feminist film theory, signalling, as do other contributors, both the potential and the problems in that critical tradition. Mayne analyses the figure of director Dorothy Arzner, drawing attention to both the elision of her lesbianism and the almost obsessive reproduction of her dyke image within feminist film criticism. Through her analysis of Sheila McLaughlin's *She Must Be Seeing Things* (1987), de Lauretis also attempts to counter the lack of space for lesbian desire within feminist film theory.

Several of the essays examine pornographic and erotic images, exploring, for example, the possibility of a visual language for safer-sex video projects. Richard Fung's analysis of the place of the Asian actor in US and Canadian gay porn offers a fascinating exploration of the complex fantasies at work in the construction of racial desirability. Kobena Mercer also takes up these issues. He points up the ambivalence of Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs of black nudes and the ways in which they will inevitably mean different things to different audiences, looking at how Mapplethorpe has been redefined through historical struggles over censorship of the exhibition of his work. Just as *How Do I Look?* calls into question what we

might term 'straight film studies', Mercer signals that it is 'whiteness' which is invisible within contemporary culture and film criticism.

Various contributors discuss the way in which the situation of marginality, or relative invisibility, imposes a burden of representation on particular texts and speakers. *How Do I Look?* is in a similar position. It is important because it belongs to an area – lesbian and gay film studies – which lacks any sustained investment by mainstream academic publishers. What is impressive about the collection is that it sets out its own terrain, refusing to speak on behalf of a homogeneous lesbian and gay community. At a time when the academy is offering space for lesbian and gay studies to develop, the contributors to this book raise questions which reach beyond institutional boundaries. As Isaac Julien points out in the concluding discussion, in lesbian and gay culture "all kinds of differences intersect". In exploring this arena, issues are raised which explode the assumptions of film criticism and the wider production of images.

How Do I Look? registers the ambivalent relationship between the academy and lesbians and gay men who, as the introduction puts it, have been "constructed in theory, not the agents of it". This recognition of the material effects of ideas and of images is the justification for bringing together image-makers and writers, 'practitioners' and 'theorists' in a fraught, but all too rare, dialogue. It is this very awareness of the ways in which theories, as regimes of knowledge, influence the ways in which we live our lives that makes this such an exciting collection.

Bad object choice:
Lois Weaver in Sheila
McLaughlin's lesbian
movie 'She Must
Be Seeing Things'



China's new star

Bin Zhao

China Turned On: Television, Reform and Resistance

James Lull, Routledge, £10.99, 208pp

This latest book by the Californian writer and researcher James Lull has a suitably west-coast title and up-beat message to match. It tells the story of China's accommodation to the age of popular television and of the medium's liberating impact on all aspects of Chinese life, from personal relationships to political conflicts. In Lull's view, "the freedom to have fun" (as he titles one of his chapters) is intimately linked to the onward march of political freedom, and China's "new and exotic worlds of popular culture" have contributed greatly to the political upheavals of recent years.

As a non-Chinese speaker, Lull relies heavily on his interpreters, particularly his Taiwan-born research assistant, who conducted the interviews with families which form one of the core chapters of this book (and also of a previous book edited by Lull on families watching television throughout the world). Although we are told that people were happy to speak openly to a foreigner and an overseas Chinese (two years before the Tiananmen pro-democracy demonstrations), many of the quotations cited in the book bear the understandable imprint of caution and self-censorship. Statements such as: "Since 1979 things are much better. We keep walking in this direction, improving living standards... We like the direction of the reformation" are typical of politic replies to polite inquiries.

The inability to reach beyond politeness to people's underlying concerns is less of a problem when Lull is describing general trends and official policies. His contextual discussions of the development of the mass media under communist rule since 1949, and of the official view of television as an instrument of propaganda and education, cover relatively familiar ground. But his chapter on the new, commercialised popular culture of recent years presents a range of material that is less well-known to western scholars. His assertion that this popular culture is linked to political movements is, however, questionable. Along with many other contemporary cultural commentators, Lull tends to overestimate the power and centrality of television, claiming that the recent resistance movement in China "could not have happened without television" and that "television is the eye of the cultural storm, its presence influencing the future of China in ways that no other technology or human agency can". In the absence of any sustained analysis of the other forces – social, economic and political – that fed the resistance movement, these claims are at best rhetorical, at worst nonsensical.

He also tends to exaggerate the open-

ness and diversity of the television system that followed in the wake of economic reforms and the open door policy of the 80s. It is true that television carried commercial advertisements and broadcast imported programmes, but it was also subject to stringent political and ideological control, and to the constraints of constant shortfalls in finance for domestic production. The television drama he analyses in detail – *The New Star*, which dealt with the political struggles between the old guards and the reform-minded younger cadres – was remarkable precisely because it was an exception.

As one might expect from his previous books, which celebrated the creativity of ordinary consumers, Lull has an overly romantic image of the Chinese television audience as guerrillas of the imagination, constantly reinterpreting and subverting officially inscribed meanings. This approach ignores the ambivalence in people's responses and the fact that a section of the audience – perhaps a substantial section – largely endorses the official line. To explain such variations and complications, one has to go beyond the narrow confines of television and audience, or indeed culture, to look at the traditions of Chinese society and its contemporary economic and political formations on the one hand, and the overlapping of the two on the other.

Inevitably, Lull's book contains many factual mistakes made by foreign researchers who do not speak Chinese. The account of the Xidan Democracy Wall, for example, is inaccurate: people were never encouraged by the government to voice their criticisms on the wall as the text assumes. Chinese names are translated incorrectly and inconsistently – sometimes by the pinyin system used in mainland China and sometimes by the Webster system used in Taiwan. All in all, the book presents an ethnocentric perspective (in contradiction to the ethnographic principles upheld by the author) shared by many western scholars, who are "intoxicated" with China, a land described by Lull as a "mystery" which is "thrilling, frustrating, fascinating" and "disappointing".

Over troubled waters

Patricia Brett Erens

Bridge of Light: Yiddish Film Between Two Worlds

J. Hoberman, Museum of Modern Art/Schocken Books, \$40, 401pp

J. Hoberman's new work on Yiddish cinema has to be the year's most handsome book. It is also full of hard-to-find information, anecdotes and some engaging trivia. In terms of both comprehensiveness and supplementary information, it goes well beyond the two previous texts on the subject (Eric A. Goldman's *Visions, Images, and Dreams: Yiddish Film Past and Present*, 1979, and Judith N. Goldberg's *Laughter Through Tears: The Yiddish Cinema*, 1983). But more



Lost but not forgotten: Molly Picon (centre) in the Yiddish classic 'Yiddle with His Fiddle'

importantly, it places Yiddish film in the context of world cinema and within Jewish socio-cultural history.

Bridge of Light provides an overview of Jewish communal life in the US, the Soviet Union, Poland and Austria, where the vast majority of Yiddish film-making took place, situating the films as part of a cultural phenomenon which spoke to certain Jews at a moment in history, primarily the 20s and 30s. In the main it was a traumatic period, whether the trauma was that of immigration or annihilation. With the benefit of this historical perspective, certain aspects – for instance, the shift from a cinema frequently critical of religious orthodoxy and secular insularity to one steeped in nostalgia and traditionalism – take on new meaning.

In an effort to provide a full picture of how both Yiddish art films and the less respected musicals and melodramas were related to contemporary Jewish culture, Hoberman makes a wise decision to include a good deal of factual material on production, distribution and especially on exhibition and reception. My favourite quote concerns a stage production of *Der Yidisher Kening Lir* (*The Yiddish King Lear*). "Watching Moshele's eldest daughter begrudge her father a bowl of soup, one spectator supposedly rose and cried: 'To hell with your stingy daughter, Yankl! She has a stone, not a heart. Spit on her and come home with me. My yidene is a good cook; she'll fix you up!'" Film viewers were hardly less involved than this vocal theatregoer.

In addition to context, *Bridge of Light* provides excellent background on scantily documented works, especially those produced in the Soviet Union. Such films include *Through Tears*; *Jewish Luck*, with the famed Yiddish actor Solomon Mikhoels; an adaptation of Isaac Babel's *Benya Krik*; and the propaganda films *Nosh Becker Fort Aheym* (*The Return of Nathan Becker*) and *Yugnt fun Rusland* (*The Youth of Russia*). These works, stored away for years in Soviet archives and seldom seen, have a gritty realism which is markedly different from the low-budget, studio-bound melodramas (*shund*) that pass for Yiddish cinema in the west. Likewise, Hoberman is owed a ▶

◀ debt of gratitude for his thorough detailing of how, with the arrival of sound, early films were recycled with Yiddish soundtracks to tap new markets.

Hoberman does not slight the Yiddish classics. *Der Dibek* (*The Dybbuk*), *Yidl mit'n Fidl* (*Yiddle with His Fiddle*), *Tevye and Mirele Efros* each get a chapter. And his discussion of Edgar Ulmer's *Grüne Felder* (*Green Fields*) is almost as lyrical as the work itself. All are well served by the inclusion of abundant visual material.

The major weakness of the book is Hoberman's lack of textual interpretation. He can be very perceptive, as in his discussion of *In di Poylishe Velder* (*In Polish Woods*) and *Uncle Moses*, but too often he opts for plot descriptions. And he fails to pull together in a meaningful way his prodigious research. The book ends, rather than concludes, with no final analysis. These reservations aside, *Bridge of Light* is an important addition to works on Jewish film and film-making, and an invaluable resource for what will hopefully be a growing group of exhibitors.

Barons and bucaniers

Graham Murdock

Media Moguls

Jeremy Tunstall and Michael Palmer, Routledge, £10.99, 258pp

Ever since the early press barons established their empires at the end of the last century, and used their newspapers to pursue personal vendettas and to puff pet causes, democrats have worried about the cultural consequences of concentrated owner power. And as the mass media system expanded and proliferated with the rise of the moving image and broadcasting industries, these concerns have grown. The central issue is, at root, political: should democracies committed to open debate allow so much potential control over the circulation of information, imagery and argument to be concentrated in so few corporate hands?

This question has acquired a new urgency in the last decade with the rise of the new multi-media conglomerates and the return of the bucaniering proprietors, epitomised in the corpulent figure of the late Robert Maxwell. His bullying managerial style and financial malpractices, though unique in some respects, cannot be dismissed as simply character failings. They stand as a lurid dramatisation of the potential for abuse within the present system. The fact that most media owners choose not to exercise their personal economic and cultural power in quite such an extreme manner does not remove the possibility that they may, on occasion, be tempted to do so.

A book that set out to investigate the powers of today's media moguls, to show how these powers were being deployed, and to explore the contextual factors that are promoting or preventing their abuse, would receive a warm welcome from

those interested in the way the modern mass media work and in the quality of democratic life. Unfortunately, Tunstall and Palmer's *Media Moguls* falls some way short of this brief.

In the first place, the scope of the book is rather narrower than the title would suggest; it deals only with media owners in Britain and western Europe, and has little or nothing to say about leading proprietors in America, Japan, Australia, or other major markets. Secondly, there are problems of definition. For Tunstall and Palmer, a media mogul is someone who has built up a media empire from scratch by taking entrepreneurial risks and who operates in a personal or eccentric style. This excludes the controllers of a number of corporations, such as Pearson (owners of the *Financial Times* and Penguin Books) who are key players in the present media field but are deemed to be barons rather than moguls, either because they head companies of long-standing, or because they are not particularly colourful or idiosyncratic. At the same time, we are treated to substantial discussions of the transformation of Reuters from a news agency to an electronic services provider and of the Bertelsmann group (owner of RCA music and Bantam Books, as well as major German publishing interests), even though the 'mogul' tag clearly applies to neither company.

This inconsistency seriously reduces the value of the discussion. It would have been far more useful to look at all the major European media corporations and to see whether those that are mogul-led have special characteristics. As it is, the distinctiveness of the media moguls is taken for granted and presented as "one way of getting a handle on the wider complexity of European media". However, it is precisely the full scope of this complexity that the authors' personality-oriented approach obscures. The contextual chapters are somewhat miscellaneous, ranging from a discussion of recent changes in western European television to an analysis of the lobbying activities of the European print and advertising industries. They certainly don't add up to an adequate discussion of the changing economic and political playing fields on which communications companies operate.

The book's strength is in the four chapters detailing the main mogul-led media companies in Britain, France, Italy and Germany, of which the last three do a good job in collecting together a range of recent information. The chapter on Britain however, is disappointingly thin and adds little to existing discussions. Anyone needing handy and reasonably up-to-date overviews of media concentration and ownership in the three European countries covered will find these chapters useful. But those looking to this book for a comprehensive analysis of the changing structures of the European media industries, the strategies of the major corporate players, and the consequences of these for the range and diversity of public information and the quality of democracy should look elsewhere.

Shorts

Martin Scorsese: A Journey

Mary Pat Kelly, Secker & Warburg, £16.99, 318pp

● Eulogistic biography consisting of interviews with family, friends, admirers and Scorsese himself, peppered with commentaries by Kelly. The book includes some evocative black and white photographs, a storyboard for a scene in *Raging Bull*, a chronology and filmography.

Uncritical Theory: Postmodernism, Intellectuals and the Gulf War

Christopher Norris, Lawrence & Wishart, £9.99, 212pp

● Norris begins with Baudrillard, whose infamous comments on the non-existence of the Gulf War seriously damaged his credibility as an 'advanced' thinker. In lively and provocative style, Norris takes apart the work of intellectuals from Derrida, Foucault and Lyotard to Chomsky, Said and Jameson, arguing that postmodernism is both intellectually and politically bankrupt.

Television and the Gulf War

David E. Morrison, John Libbey, £15, 100pp

● The results of an extensive survey from the Leeds University Institute of Communications Studies of the responses of British viewers to television coverage of the war. Areas covered include fair reporting, censorship, children's responses, and reactions to images of death and injury.

John McCarty's Official

Splatter Movie Guide Vol II

John McCarty, St. Martin's Press, \$12.95, 199pp

● McCarty claims to have coined the term 'splatter movie' to designate a wide range of films from Dario Argento's ultra-violent *Opera* ("low on plot but high on gore") to Spielberg's *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. His selections are provocative rather than comprehensive: *The Silence of the Lambs* is described as a "splatter masterpiece", while *Total Recall* qualifies as a "blood and guts pot-boiler".

Vulgar Modernism:

Writings on Movies and Other Media

J. Hoberman, Temple University Press, \$16.95, 346pp

● A collection of Hoberman's reviews and essays written in the 80s, reflecting a unique blend of cinephiliac passion and cultural criticism. The title essay, first published in *Artforum* magazine, characteristically pokes about in the peripheral corners of the US culture industry to find ironic, irreverent examples of vulgar modernism from Tex Avery and Frank Tashlin to Mad's Ernie Kovacs.

The Difficulty of Difference:

Psychoanalysis, Sexual Difference and Film Theory

D. N. Rodowick, Routledge, £9.99, 162pp

● Rodowick discusses the way spectatorship and identification has been understood in psychoanalytically influenced film theory, attempting to move beyond binary male/female oppositions to a more complex notion of sexual identity as fragile and in flux. In an extended analysis of Rivette's *Céline and Julie Go Boating*, he develops his theory that phantasy can only ever be imperfectly realised.



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Reviews

Afraid of the Dark



Wild child: Ben Keyworth

Certificate

18
Distributor
 Rank
Production Companies
 Telescope Films/
 Les Films Ariane/
 Ciné Cinq
 In association with
 Sovereign Pictures
Executive Producers
 Jean Nachbaur
 Sylvaine Saiderichin
Producer
 Simon Bosanquet
Production Co-ordinator
 Patsy De Lord
Production Manager
 Mary Richards
Location Manager
 Nick Daubeny
Casting
 Lucy Boulting
Assistant Directors
 Jonathan Benson
 Melvin Lind
 Anthony Ford
Screenplay
 Mark Peploe

Director of Photography

Bruno de Keyzer
 In colour
Camera Operators
 Dominique Pinto
 2nd Unit:
 Philip Sindall
Editor
 Scott Thomas
Production Designer
 Caroline Amies
Art Director
 Stephen Scott
Special Effects Supervisor
 John Markwell
Music
 Richard Hartley
Music Editor
 Andrew Glen
Costume Design
 Louise Stjernsward
Wardrobe Supervisor
 Patrick Wheatley
Make-up
 Supervisor:
 Tommie Manderson
 Artist:
 Sallie Evans
Sound Editors
 Mark Auguste
 Dialogue:
 Richard Fettes
ADR Editor
 Shirley Shaw
Footsteps Editor
 Bob Gavin
Sound Recordist
 Tony Jackson
Sound Re-recordist
 Robin O'Donoghue
Stunt Co-ordinator
 Martin Grace
Animal Handler
 Belinda Chapman

Cast

James Fox
 Frank
Fanny Ardant
 Miriam
Paul McGann
 Tony Dalton
Clare Holman
 Rose
Robert Stephens
 Dan Burns
Susan Wooldridge
 Lucy Trent
Ben Keyworth
 Lucas
David Thewlis
 Tom Miller/Locksmith
Struan Rodger
 Window Cleaner
Rosalind Knight
 Edith Simpkins
Jeremy Flynn
 Jim Gilbert
Star Acri
 Girl at Wedding/
 Cemetery/Jane
Niven Boyd
 Ice-cream Man/
 Shop Owner
Sheila Burrell
 Meg
Frances Cuka
 Mrs Dalton
Gerard Dimiglio
 Wedding Guest/
 Policeman with
 Walkie-talkie
Laurence Harrington
 Mr Lewis/Man with
 Centrefold
Oona Howard
 Georgia/Girl on
 Embankment
Hilary Mason
 Basement Woman
Catriona McColl
 Blind Woman at
 Reach Out House
Daniel Andr Pagoon
 Wedding Guest/
 Policeman at Lucy
 Trent's
Colleen Passard
 Nurse with Knitting
Lola Peploe
 Girl at Wedding/
 Cemetery
Jean Serret
 Blind Man at Reach
 Out House/Bob
Ed Stobart
 Guest Who Toasts/
 Police Driver
Gwynneth Strong
 Blind Mother
 with Baby
Cassie Stuart
 Redhead/
 Centrefold Woman

8,269 feet
 92 minutes

United Kingdom/France 1991

Director: Mark Peploe

● Eavesdropping on his parents Miriam and Frank (a police inspector) at their West London home, eleven-year-old Lucas hears that blind women in the area have been slashed by an unknown attacker. Next day, Lucas accompanies Miriam, who is blind herself, to the day centre where she teaches knitting. Her unsighted friend Rose has an appointment with the local photographer, Tony Dalton, and Lucas tags along, uneasy about an inquisitive window cleaner. Rose is joined by her blind fiancé Jim, and Lucas transfers his vigilance to another blind girl he sees hurrying home. While Lucas is investigating a neighbour's house the girl is attacked, and Frank is assigned to the case. He talks to the day centre principal, Dan Burns, and warns Miriam and her class.

While Lucas plays with Toby, a neighbour's dog, in his hideaway in Brompton Cemetery, a woman is attacked at a nearby Underground station. Rejoining Rose, Lucas watches as her locks are changed. The locksmith's sinister behaviour makes him nervous and that night, when he hears Toby barking in the cemetery, he climbs out of his bedroom window to check on Rose. He disturbs a prowler, who chases after Lucas until Toby comes to his rescue. Lucas finds that Rose has returned to the photographer's studio and is about to be attacked by Tony. Bursting in, Lucas grabs a knitting needle from Rose's bag and drives it into Tony's right eye.

Lucas returns to reality. It is the day of his half-sister Rose's marriage to personable young photographer Tony. His florist father Frank is excited that Miriam's pregnancy is in its final stages, and at the same time worried that an operation will soon be necessary on Lucas' deteriorating eyesight. At the reception, Miriam is taken to hospital with labour pains. Lucas visits optician Dan Burns to collect his new glasses. Back home, when Toby tries to get in through a half-open window, Lucas panics and kills him with a knitting needle. He clears up the mess before Frank returns with the news that Lucas has a baby sister.

While backs are turned, Lucas snatches the child and takes her, and a knitting needle, to his hideaway, pursued by blind people. He finds himself trapped by Dan Burns – and then by the surgeon performing his operation. When it is over, his parents are assured that his chances of recovering both his sight and his emotional stability are good.

● Given screenwriter Mark Peploe's allegiances (to

Reviews, synopses
 and full credits for
 all the month's new
 films and new
 British TV films

Overseers:
 Fanny Ardant, James Fox



Antonioni and Bertolucci in particular), it is no surprise that his first film as a director is composed of sharply defined colours, ominous camera movements and troubling shots of nothing in particular. Nobody in *Afraid of the Dark* is quite what they seem, the most marginal details quiver with meaning, and no action can be trusted to have 'actually' occurred. This is a cunning horror show of fantasies and deceptions in which a tiny role receives special emphasis from the actress who played the blind psychic in Nicolas Roeg's *Don't Look Now*, in which a newsagent's shop carries the name of 'Vigo', and in which a passing pram insinuates that catastrophic afternoon in *L'Eclisse*.

His most subversive trick is to bring the story to a shuddering halt halfway through, making a fresh start with the protagonists rearranged and new and different purposes. The Dario-Argento-in-Bayswater-style thriller, peopled with victims and suspects, razors and bloodshed, joltingly shifts gear into a more domestic scenario in which a boy fears losing his family (his sister's getting married, his parents are obsessed with their next baby) along with his failing sight. Putting us on our guard, Peplow combines case history with game-playing, slowly building to a fresh (if less plausible) outburst of violence and concluding with an ingenious reintegration of both sides of his diptych, the kind of little-do-they-know detail that promises a gory sequel.

Peplow endows the London locations with a vacant malevolence, taking a series of detours among brooding facades, their windows occasionally disclosing figures engaged in rituals of contemplation. Spying on them all, the boy consumes these images with a cineaste's hunger, making of them what sense he can. This reluctant, confused exile from society evokes Bertolucci's youngsters (in *The Last Emperor*, 1900 or *La Luna*) and might be glimpsed, too, in the wild child of Peplow's earlier unfilmed scripts on the Kaspar Hauser theme.

Over-generous with significant detail, Peplow is less forthcoming when it comes to his characters. Earnestly played by James Fox and Fanny Ardant, the boy's parents are a formal and unconvincing couple. Forced into small talk, his cast conveys the insincerity of intimates who have just met. As overheard by the disenchanted child (played with commendable impassivity by Ben Keyworth), these brittle exchanges have an unarguable authenticity but – except when put over by Robert Stephens, an actor disinclined towards anonymity – they bleach the life from the action.

Philip Strick

At Play in the Fields of the Lord

Certificate
15
Distributor
Entertainment
Production Company
Saul Zaentz Company
Executive Producers
Francisco Ramalho Jnr
David Nichols
Producer
Saul Zaentz
Associate Producer
Paul Zaentz
Production Co-ordinator
Carla Niemeyer
Office Production Manager
Judi Bunn
Unit Managers
Joao Catroli
Edson José Mendonça
Fernando Zagallo
José Carlos Freire
Flavio Chaves
Aerial:
Manuele Franceschini
Production:
David Nichols
Brazil:
Bruno Wainer
Post-production Co-ordinator
David Bergad
2nd Unit Director
Roberto Gervitz
Aerial Unit Director
David Jones
Casting USA:
Dianne Crittenden
Brazil:
Graca Motta
José Augusto de Souza
Extras:
José Luis Bello
Marribe Knez
Assistant Directors
Steve Andrews
Philip Patterson
Brazil:
Vincente Amorim
Alberto Gieco
Flavia Brasil
José Henrique Fonseca
Aerial Unit:
Edgard Moura
Screenplay
Jean-Claude Carrière
Hector Babenco
Based on the novel by Peter Matthiessen
Director of Photography
Lauro Escorel
Colour
Technicolor;
prints by DeLuxe
2nd Unit Photography
Pedro Farkas
Aerial Photography
Stan McClain
Camera Operator
Alexandre Fonseca
Steadicam Operator
Larry McConkey
Video Playback
Vicente Kubrusly
Editors
William Anderson
Additional:
Armen Minasian
Louise Innes
Production Designer
Clovis Bueno
Art Directors
Marlise Storch
Antonio Vanzolini
Roberto Mainieri
Art Department Production Co-ordinator
Beatriz Castro
Storyboard Artist
Hector Gomez
Painters
Mural:
Adir Sodre
Airplane:
Jeso Carlos Cornelsen
Special Effects Co-ordinator
Chucho Duran



Cuckoo: Tom Berenger

Special Effects

Special Effects
Unlimited
Adrian Duran
Martinez
Fermin Duran
Martinez
Alejandro Duran
Vasquez
Antonio Cornejo
Valenzuela
Armando Olvera
San Miguel
Music
Zbigniew Preisner
Music Director
Antoni Wit
Music Performed by
Polish Radio Grand
Symphony Orchestra
Vocal Solos:
Marlui Miranda
Singers:
George Camara
Deborah Dietrich
Robert Ernst
Corey Fischer
Lorri Holt
Joseph Joffe
Nancy Jones
M.J. Lallo
Brain Lohmann
Sarah Ludlow
Gunnar Madsen
Maureen McVerry
Shannon O'Hurley
Mark Petrakis
Claudio Sila
Indigenous Music Producers
Mark Adler
Marlui Miranda
Music Editors
Supervising:
Robert Randles
Associate:
Ewa Sztompke
Indian Dance/Movement Choreographer
Julia Pascale
Costume Design
Rita Murtinho
American Cast Costumes
Aggie Guerard
Rodgers
Wardrobe Supervisors
Beatriz Salgado
Iris Horta Lemos
Costumers
Ilma da Costa Santos
Ana Maria Rosa
Make-up Design
Jaqueline Monteiro
Make-up Artists
Anna Van Steen
Tom Berenger:
Joann Wabisca
Title Design
Phil Carroll
Titles/Opticals
Cinema Research Corporation

Supervising Sound Editors

Alan Splet
Dialogue:
Patrick Dodd
Sound Editors
Marilyn McCoppen
Barbara McBane
ADR Editor
Mark Levinson
Supervising Foley Editor
Diana Pellegrini
Foley Editor
Ernie Fosselius
Sound Recordists
Foley:
Eric Thompson
Richard Duarte
Music:
Zbigniew Malecki
Aleksander Dowsilas
Aerial Unit:
Chris Newman
Dolby stereo
Supervising Sound Re-recorder
Mark Berger
Sound Re-recorder
David Parker
Todd Boekelheide
Sound Effects Editors
Ann Kroeber
John Verbeck
Pat Jackson
Frank Eulner
Foley Artists
Margie O'Malley
Jennifer Myers
Loop Group Co-ordinator
Burton Sharp
Loop Group
Fausto Bara
Leonard Camarillo
Richard Caruso
Cecilia Dighero-House
Ricardo Ferran
Anthony Galvan
Jorge Galvan
Barbara Goodson
Kerry Gutierrez
Marabina Jaimes
Peter Lownds
Urbanie Lucero
Laura Lustosa
José Marino
Kristina Mills
Dyana Orrelli
Humberto Ortiz
Bert Rosario
Bel Sandre
Rick Taylor
Jerry Velasco
Noah Verduzco
Renee Victor
Igor Zatespin
Production Adviser
Caito Martins
Animal Consultant
Professor Antonio
Jairo Fagundes
Production Anthropologist
Dominique Gallois

Production Assistants

Andreia Ramalho
Onofre Bonesso Jnr
Wilson Bernardi
Katia Lund
Jacqueline Arakawa
Peter Newman
Marcel Ferreira de Souza
Marcos Antonio
Soares Franca
Dominique Cohen
José Leonidas Soares
Sandra Oliveira
Aerial Unit:
Elizabeth Baralt
Indian Actors:
Abraao Barcessat
Bemerguy
Research
Indian:
Iris Horta Lemos
Missionary:
Katia Lund
Niaruna Language Creator
Marlui Miranda
Air/Ground Co-ordinators
Otavio Brasil
Brazil:
Laura Smith
Venezuela:
Henry Urgoiti
Parachute Jumps
Marcos Pettena
Ronaldo Fagundes
Ricardo Pettena
Helmet Camera:
Ricardo Pettena
Stand-ins
Tom Berenger:
Ulysses Silva
John Lithgow:
Luis Claudio
Daryl Hannah:
Alessandra Cavalcanti
Aidan Quinn:
Estanislau Picanco
Kathy Bates:
Margaret Relkalefsky
Tom Waits:
Barros Tavares
Niilo Kivirinta:
Gutelio Silva
Animal Handlers
Claudel Soares Lessa
Ramiro B. Netto
Reptile Wrangler
Pedro Nascimento
Cerveira
Pilots
David Jones
Peter McKernan
Dirk Vahle

Cast

Tom Berenger
Lewis Moon
John Lithgow
Leslie Huben
Daryl Hannah
Aidan Huben
Aidan Quinn
Martin Quarrier
Tom Waits
Wolf
Kathy Bates
Hazel Quarrier
Stenio Garcia
Boronai
Nelson Xavier
Father Xantes
José Dumont
Commandante
Guzman
Niilo Kivirinta
Billy Quarrier
S. Yriwana Karaja
Aeore
José Renato Lana
Uyuyu
Riu Polanah
Kori
Carlos Xavante
Tukanu
Ione Machado
Pindi
Edwidge Ribeiro
Taweeda
Mutahi Pataxo
Mutu

16,737 feet
186 minutes

USA 1991

Director: Hector Babenco

Two American mercenaries, Wolf and a half-Cheyenne pilot Lewis Moon, land their small plane in the Amazonian backwater town Mae de Deus, only to have it and their passports impounded by Guzman, the local commandante. They encounter two American fundamentalist missionaries, Leslie Huben and his wife Andy, who are soon joined by their less experienced colleagues Martin and Hazel Quarrier, with their young son Billy. Guzman is waging a war on the local tribe of Niaruna Indians, and tries to coerce the mercenaries to bomb them so that their land can be annexed for gold mining. The missionaries hope to convert the Niaruna, and Quarrier tries to forestall the raid.

Moon is not convinced, but flying over the Niaruna village with Wolf, catches sight of a young archer and refuses to bomb. On returning, Moon gets drunk on a local hallucinogenic brew and flies off alone. Short of fuel, he parachutes into the jungle, where the Niaruna acclaim him as the thunder spirit Kisu Mu, and induct him into tribal life. The missionaries embark upriver, planning to found their mission where a Catholic party was earlier killed by Niarunas. The Hubens decide to leave but the Quarriers remain behind; the Niarunas accept the Quarriers' gifts, although Moon warns the latter to be wary.

When Billy falls mortally ill with blackwater fever, Leslie comes to fetch him, but he arrives too late. The converted Niarunas undertake to punish the enemy who sent Billy's death and settle on Leslie, who promptly leaves. Guzman tries to coerce Leslie into keeping his promise to 'tame' the Niarunas. The Hubens return to the mission, which Leslie turns into a fortress. While out swimming, Andy is approached and kissed by Moon, whom she recognises; returning to the village, he inadvertently passes Andy's flu on to his Indian wife Pindi, starting an epidemic among the tribe.

Moon approaches the mission for medicine, and arrives to find Hazel undergoing a mental breakdown. Another priest, Father Xantes, tells Martin that Guzman is determined to seize the Niarunas' land, and tells him to warn the tribe via Moon. In the Niaruna village, Martin finds the tribe decimated by flu, while Moon's authority is being challenged by his rival Aeore, the archer he saw from the air. As the village is bombed, Martin is killed. Upriver, Moon is confronted by Aeore and kills him. Stranded without a canoe, Moon paints himself with the ritual red dye of the Niarunas.

Published in 1965, Peter Matthiessen's novel of religious and economic colonialism on the Amazon seems ideally suited to adaptation by a 90s Hollywood that likes to think of itself as eco-conscious and politically correct. The book has been quite faithfully adapted, by director Hector Babenco and Jean-Claude Carrière – although the action shifts from a Spanish-speaking country to Brazil – but is perhaps inevitably flavoured by contemporary assumptions about what a liberal rainforest movie should be like.

The film's main problem is how to maintain the story's mythic and personal dimension while giving a realistic impression of the life of the Amazonian tribes and the problems they face. In his methods of working with the Indians, Babenco sought to avoid disrupting the culture (something of which Werner Herzog has been much accused); and the picture of tribal life that emerges is commendably untouristic, if not always unvoyeuristic. But the fact that so much of the narrative revolves around Moon as the cuckoo in the nest means that the Niaruna themselves rather recede into the background.

On the other side of the narrative, the missionaries behave too much by rote to be of real interest, and there is little moral weight in the foundering of their beliefs. Quarrier is reduced to being a voice of reason, on hand to provide a reliable subjective viewpoint and to make the story's issues obvious – querying the ethics of 'bribing' the Niarunas into belief, shaking his head disapprovingly at the sight of a jungle fire. The film seems ill at ease with its own deconstruction of the *Heart of Darkness* myth, uncertain quite how carefully it needs to handle the key terms 'savage' and 'civilised', or how deliberately to signal the quote marks around each one. At times, it opts for a return-to-nature nostalgia that just falls short of *The Blue Lagoon* – in young Billy's carefree romping with the Niaruna children, and in a mildly prurient episode when a languorously naked Daryl Hannah is approached by the 'savage' Moon: a scene dangerously reminiscent of the Natrel deodorant ad, and a cliché fantasy of white woman's encounter with the Other.

When Moon is finally left alone to continue as – effectively – the last Niaruna, the ending seems inevitable without being tragic, a moment of exhaustion rather than ironic closure. The film appears to be aiming at a more positive replay of the desolate ending of *Aguirre, Wrath of God*; in fact, in three hours, we've seen nothing more substantial than *Dances with Bushbabies*.

Jonathan Romney

La Belle Noiseuse

Certificate

15

Distributor

Artificial Eye

Production Company

Pierre Grise

Producer

Pierre Grise

Associate Producer

Martine Marignac

Production Manager

Janou Shammass

Location Manager

Thomas Pitre

Assistant Directors

Lorraine Groleau

Anne Billiotte

Screenplay

Pascal Bonitzar

Christine Laurent

Based on the story

Le Chef d'oeuvre inconnu

by Honoré de Balzac

Director of

Photography

William Lubtchansky

In colour

Editor

Nicole Lubtchansky

Art Director

Emmanuel

de Chauvigny

Set Decorator

Valérie Segond

Music Extracts

"Agon", "Petrushka"

by Igor Stravinsky

Wardrobe

Laurence Struz

Make-up

Susan Robertson

Sound Editor

Florian Eidenbenz

Cast

Michel Piccoli

Frenhofer

Jane Birkin

Liz

Emmanuelle Béart

Marianne

David Bursztein

Nicolas

Marianne Denicourt

Julienne

Gilles Arbona

Porbus

Bernard Dufour

The Painter

21,450 feet

239 minutes

Subtitles

France 1991

Director: Jacques Rivette

Nicolas, a promising young painter and his mistress Marianne, a writer, staying at a country inn near Montpellier, are met by art dealer Porbus, who takes them to meet the famous but long-inactive painter Frenhofer at the latter's nearby château. Frenhofer lives there with his wife and former model Liz, who now spends much of her time stuffing birds. While the guests are being shown around Frenhofer's windowless studio, Liz alludes to "La Belle Noiseuse", an unfinished painting that Frenhofer abandoned a decade ago.

Frenhofer denies its existence, but later in the evening, spurred on by the encouragement of Porbus and Nicolas, he decides to make another stab at this crowning masterpiece (which Porbus agrees to buy), securing Nicolas' permission for Marianne to serve as his model. Furious with Nicolas when she hears about this arrangement, Marianne none the less arrives at the château for her appointment, and Frenhofer devotes the day to sketching her, mainly in the nude, in various difficult poses.

The next day he begins painting her; Nicolas meanwhile visits Liz at work to confide his worries about Marianne's growing estrangement from him... As the painting nears completion, and the work grows in intensity, both couples teeter on the brink of a crisis: Liz feels betrayed when she discovers Frenhofer has painted Marianne over an earlier painting of herself, and Marianne's estrangement from Nicolas is brought to a head when his sister Julienne arrives at the inn for a visit.

When Marianne and Liz separately view the finished work (unseen by the audience), they are appalled. Unbeknownst to the others, Frenhofer covers the painting and permanently buries it behind a new brick wall in his studio and, before the return of Porbus (who, it transpires, is a former lover of Liz's), quickly executes a more conventional work to take its place. When the work is successfully unveiled to Porbus, Liz is delighted by the substitution, and Marianne, now showing more independence from Nicolas, seems to have been permanently changed by her experience as a model.

Not merely an exciting return to form, but also something of a personal testament, Rivette's masterpiece, a very free adaptation of Balzac's *Le Chef d'oeuvre inconnu*, can be read in part as an apologia for the narrative cautiousness that his work has shown since the dangerous experimentation of his richest period (roughly, from *L'Amour fou* in 1968 to

Noroît in 1976). For all the distinction of most of his subsequent work, a backing away from the theme of madness – explicit in *L'Amour fou* and *Out 1*, rationalised in *Céline et Julie vont en bateau*, internalised in *Duelle* and *Noroît* – has placed most of his work since *Merry-Go-Round* at a lower risk level. Since *Out*, moreover, one can chart a nearly parallel retreat from the contemporary world: if the Balzac reference in *Out* offered an ironic nineteenth-century perspective on 60s counter-culture, the Balzac reference in *La Belle Noiseuse* establishes that Rivette has fully adopted this perspective as his own.

Ultimately opting for life over art – for saving his marriage rather than plunging into the void opened up by his painful masterpiece – Frenhofer, powerfully embodied by Michel Piccoli in the performance of his career, seems to be making a comparable choice. If *La Belle Noiseuse* suggests at times a remake of *L'Amour fou*, with Frenhofer's sketches and brush strokes and Marianne's alternating bouts of compliance and rebellion taking the place of the earlier film's theatre rehearsals, certain concerns remain constant: the material processes of work (including its duration and rhythms) and its profoundly collaborative nature. What seems new is an ironic perception of the art market (as embodied by Porbus) and a somewhat sadder but wiser perception of the perils that risky art-making entails.

It is both satisfying and just that the first commercial hit of Rivette's career should be four hours long. Despite much moaning over the years from critics about his running times – complaints which have indeed played a part in obliging him to make shorter films – the fact remains that, with very few exceptions, the longer his films run, the more disciplined and purposeful they turn out to be. As it happens, Rivette has also edited a two-hour version of *La Belle Noiseuse* for French TV using completely different takes,

but it's no surprise to hear that he himself judges it inferior; in the three other cases where he has edited shorter versions of his films – *L'Amour fou*, *Out 1*, *L'Amour par terre* – the superiority of the longer version is irrefutable.

Duration and process are central to Rivette's concerns, and the viewer's changing perception of Emmanuelle Béart's nude body from pure erotic object to painterly material over the course of four hours is fundamentally linked to the mysterious changes undergone by all the major characters – changes occurring both in terms of the plot and in terms of the spectator's shifting relationship to the action. This isn't, moreover, an issue that can be reduced to long versus short takes: Rivette's jump cuts and other elisions are as central to his strategies as his use of real time.

The film's key scene features neither nudity nor painting but a confrontational dialogue between Liz and Frenhofer in their adjoining bedrooms and on a connecting terrace. Interestingly, this terrace recalls the ramparts where life-and-death struggles are waged in *Noroît*, and Rivette's musical sense of *mise en scène* has never been more masterful in charting both the literal movements of a couple and the 'stations' of their passion (in both the carnal and Christian senses).

Bracketing his tale with bantering dialogues and social poses that suggest Marivaux, Rivette seems more conscious than ever of art as a treacherous house of fiction planted within a wider world, in this case, a sensual rural setting that is beautifully captured in sound and image. The fact that we never catch more than a glimpse of Frenhofer's 'real' finished masterpiece – a flash of bloody red in the lower section – suggests both the mysteries and the terrors that the remainder of the film outlines, negotiates, and desperately contains.

Jonathan Rosenbaum

Bugsy



Screen power: Annette Bening, Warren Beatty

Certificate

18

Distributor

Columbia TriStar

Production

Mulholland

Productions/

Baltimore Pictures

For TriStar Pictures

Producers

Mark Johnson

Barry Levinson

Warren Beatty

Co-producer

Charles Newirth

Production

Co-ordinator

Allegria Clegg

Production Manager

Charles Newirth

Location Managers

Amy Ness

Robert Goldstein

Post-production

Supervisor

Allegria Clegg

Casting

Ellen Chenoweth

Associate:

Juel Bestrop

Additional:

The Casting Group

Assistant Directors

Peter Giuliano

Gabriela Vazquez

Kate Davey

George Bamber

Screenplay

James Toback

Research drawn from

the book *We Only Kill*

Each Other: The Life and

Bad Times of Bugsy Siegel

by Dean Jennings

Director of

Photography

Allen Daviau

Colour

Technicolor

Camera Operators

Eric Engler

Paul C. Babin

Video Playback

David Katz

Matte Artist

Mark Sullivan

Editors

Stu Linder

Additional:

James Flamberg

Production Designer

Dennis Gassner

Art Director

Leslie McDonald

Art Department

Co-ordinator

Martin Kohn

Set Design

Lawrence A. Hubbs

Set Decorator

Nancy Haigh

Set Dressers

Paige Augustine

Claire Gaul

Tinker Linville

Production Illustrator

Joseph F. Griffith Jnr

Special Effects

Supervisor

Clay Pinney

Special Effects

Foreman

William Harrison

Special Effects

Marvin Gardner

Miniature Effects

Stetson Visual Services:

Mark Stetson

Robert Spurlock

Models

Designer:

Tom Valentine

Production

Co-ordinator:

Laurel Schneider

Model Makers:

Ian Hunter

James McGeachy

Scott Schneider

Tom Griep

Music/Music Director

Ennio Morricone

Music Performed by

Unione Musicisti

Di Roma

Flugelhorn:

Francesco Santucci

Flute:

Paolo Zampini

Alto Sax:

Rosario Giuliani

Orchestration

Ennio Morricone

Executive Music

Producer

James Flamberg

Music Supervisor

Allan Mason

Music Co-ordinator

Enrico De Melis

Songs

"Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate

the Positive" by Johnny

Mercer, Harold Arlen,

performed by Johnny

Mercer; "Candy" by

Alex Kramer, Mack

David, Joan Whitney,

performed by Johnny

Mercer, Jo Stafford;

"Come Rain or Come

Shine" by Johnny

Mercer, Harold Arlen,

"Moonlight in

Vermont" by Karl

Suessdorf, John

Blackburn, performed

by Margaret Whiting;

"Fools Rush In (Where

Angels Fear to Tread)"

by Rube Bloom, Johnny

Mercer, performed by

Tommy Dorsey and his

Orchestra; "Long Ago

and Far Away" by

Jerome Kern, Ira

Gershwin, performed

by Jo Stafford; "Ole

Buttermilk Sky" by

Hoagy Carmichael,

Jack Brooks, performed

by Kay Kyser and his

Orchestra; "On a Slow

Boat to China" by

Frank Loesser;

"Perfidia" by Alberto

Dominguez, Milton

Leeds, performed by

Glenn Miller and his

Orchestra; "Tanga,

Rumba-Afro-Cubana"

by Mario Bauza,

performed by Machito's

Orchestra (Soloist: Flip

Phillips); "There I've

Said It Again!" by Redd

Evans, David Mann,

performed by Vaughn

Monroe; "Torna

a Surriento" by Ernesto

DeCurtis, B. G.

DeCurtis; "Waitin' for

the Train to Come In"

by Sunny Skylar,

Martin Block, "Why

Don't You Do Right?

(Get Me Some Money

Too)" by Joe McCoy,

performed

by Peggy Lee

Choreographers

Dennon Rawles

Sayber Rawles

Costume Design

Albert Wolksy

Wardrobe

Men's Supervisor:

George L. Little

Men:

Dennis M. Fill

Mike Balkar

Lawrence Velasco

Norman Arthur Burza

Women's Supervisor:

Carlane Passman

Women:

Jennifer Morrison

Christopher Lawrence

Deborah Squires

Special:

Don Vargas



Life and art struggle: Michel Piccoli

Reviews

La Belle Noiseuse Bugsy

Make-up

Kathryn Miles Kelly
Matthew W. Mungle
Key:

Hallie D'Amore

Special:

Cheri Minns

Special Make-up

Effects

Rob Bottin

Crew

Fernando Favila

Henry Alvarez

James Clark

Art Pimentel

Russ Shinkle

Loren Soman

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Sound Design

Richard Beggs

Supervising

Sound Editor

Gloria S. Borders

Sound Editors

Dialogue:

Paige Sartorius

Stacey Folles

ADR Editor

C. J. Appel

Supervising

Foley Editor

Marian Wilde

Foley Editors

Ethan Van der Ryn

Clare C. Freeman

Sound Recordists

Willie D. Burton

Music:

Franco Patrignani

Foley:

Christopher Boyes

ADR:

David Jobe

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Richard Beggs

Tom Johnson

ADR:

Bob Deschaine

Sound Effects

Editors

Tim Holland

Bob Shoup

Foley

Dennie Thorpe

Marnie Moore

Production

Assistants

Jodi Fuchs

Jay Gianukos

Michael R. Gurasich

Christine Hebble

Kelly Householder

Aimee A. Morris

Beth Siegel

Stunt Co-ordinator

Billy Burton

Stunts

Billy Burton

Dennis R. Scott

Thomas L. Lupo

Michael Watson

Film Extract

Scarface (1932)

Cast

Warren Beatty

Benjamin

"Bugsy" Siegel

Annette Bening

Virginia Hill

Harvey Keitel

Mickey Cohen

Ben Kingsley

Meyer Lansky

Elliott Gould

Harry Greenberg

Joe Mantegna

George Raft

Richard Sarafian

Jack Dragna

Bebe Neuwirth

Countess di Frasso

Gian-Carlo Scanduzzi

Count di Frasso

Wendy Phillips

Esta Siegel

Stefanie Mason

Millicent Siegel

Kimberly McCullough

Barbara Siegel

Andy Romano

Del Webb

Robert Beltran

Alejandro

Bill Graham

Charlie Luciano

Lewis Van Bergen

Joey Adonis

Joseph Roman

Moe Sedway

James Toback

Gus Greenbaum

Don Carrara

Vito Genovese

Carmine Caridi

Frank Costello

Don Calfa

Louie Dragna

Robert Glaudini

Dominic

Bryan Smith

Chick Hill

Ray McKinnon

David Hinton

Eric Christmas

Ronald the Butler

Joe Baker

Lawrence Tibbett

John C. Moskoff

Sulka's Salesman

Ralph Tabakin

Elevator Operator

Debrah Farentino

Girl in Elevator

Anthony Russell

Jerry the Bookie

Wendie Malick

Woman on Train

DeVera Marcus

Fan at Train Station

Ksenia Prohaska

Marlene Dietrich

Peter Giuliano

"Manpower" Assistant

Director

Austin Kelly

"Manpower" Maitre d'

Michael Kenner

"Manpower"

Clapperboy

Bruce E. Morrow

D. A. McWilde

Clive Rosengren

Deputy D.A. Hartman

Gary McGurk

Tony the Waiter

Gerard Joseph

McKenna

Ciro's Photographer

Paul Roache

Taxi Driver

Tommy Townsend

Steven D. Maines

Federal Marshals

Traci Lind

Natalie St. Clair

David H. Hebble

Cadillac Driver

Michael Sollenberger

Bond Rally Speaker

Jamie Angell

Courthouse Guard

Julie Christensen

Susan Rumor

Lloyd Baskin

Hal Melia

Fred Lehto

Kal David

Albina Bocchicchio

Cathleen Crone

Ciro's Singers

12,235 feet

136 minutes

USA 1991

Director: Barry Levinson

Benjamin Siegel, known to those who don't know him as "Bugsy", is assigned by fellow New York syndicate members Meyer Lansky and "Lucky" Luciano, to take over the California rackets. Greeted in Hollywood by his old friend George Raft, Ben spots starlet Virginia Hill on the set of Raft's new film *Manpower*; unlike most girls, however, she rejects his advances. Ben forcibly buys the Beverly Hills mansion of opera singer Lawrence Tibbett and becomes a prominent socialite in the show-business community. He even finances his own screen test, while terrorising racketeer Jack Dragna, who claims to have been robbed by small-time hood Mickey Cohen. But Ben employs Mickey as his assistant and recovers the cash, part stolen by Dragna himself.

Virginia at last succumbs to his attentions and they begin a stormy relationship; Ben is jealous of her innumerable past liaisons while she is angry that he refuses to divorce his wife, Esta. On a visit to one of the syndicate's operations in the Nevada desert, in the woebegone town of Las Vegas, Ben has an inspiration: he will take advantage of Nevada's moderate gambling laws to set up a giant hotel-casino, to be called The Flamingo (Virginia's nickname). Lansky and Luciano reluctantly agree to back the million-dollar enterprise, and architects and designers are soon being commissioned by Virginia, who will be a part-owner. A former associate of Ben's, the simple-minded Harry Greenberg, one day arrives unexpectedly, having thoughtlessly betrayed a number of underworld colleagues to the police. Regretfully, Ben takes him for a drive from which Harry doesn't return.

At a party to see off Luciano, who is being deported, Ben defends the ever-rising cost of The Flamingo. He also takes advantage of the occasion to beat up Joey Adonis, one of Virginia's former lovers; but he is unable to ask Esta for a divorce, until she forces him to do so. Arrested for the murder of Harry Greenberg, Ben soon ensures that there is no evidence against him and he is released. The cost of the hotel is now estimated at six million dollars; for the sake of their childhood friendship, Lansky puts up a further contribution, but Ben has to find the remainder by selling shares in the venture, several times over. Mickey warns him that Virginia has siphoned off two million dollars into a Swiss bank account, but Ben refuses to believe him.

In exile in Cuba, Luciano demands that Lansky put an end to Ben and his project, but Lansky suggests that

they wait until the results of the hotel's gala opening, scheduled for Christmas Day. The event is a disaster; amid torrential rains, few customers, including the promised celebrities, show up, and Ben announces immediate closure, pending a grand reopening. A phone call from Lansky summons him back to Los Angeles, and as his plane is about to leave, Virginia confesses to having appropriated the two million. Ben forgives her and suggests she keep the money in the bank. In his Beverly Hills mansion, as he again watches the screen test that failed to make him a star, Ben is shot dead. At The Flamingo, Virginia is told the news; aghast, she walks away from the place which, fulfilling Siegel's vision, is destined to make a fortune.

Toback or not Toback, there's little question that *Bugsy*, an Oscar-demanding chorale for four voices, bears strong resemblance to a costumed and customised *Pick-Up Artist*, the story of an ambitious young man felled by a singular passion. It also tackles most of the themes raised by Toback's manipulative collection of filmed interviews, *The Big Bang*, in which members of his regular team, among others, theorise about life, sex and the universe. These were the films Toback completed during the six years he was constructing his Siegel script at the suggestion of – and under contract to – his friend Warren Beatty. Determined that *Bugsy* was all his ("Siegel has been in my system since I was nineteen"), Toback was then forced to cede the director's chair to Barry Levinson, who was brought in by Beatty on the principle that three heads would argue more rigorously than two. Present throughout the shooting, Toback now generously attests that he couldn't have done better himself. After all, it's still *his* story.

First shout, though, goes to Siegel himself, soon to be heard in two further film portraits. Beatty insists that apart from the compression of the Siegel story into the span of his Hollywood years, the film is all true. The record is clear that Siegel struggled endlessly to overcome his Brooklyn accent (providing Beatty with a compulsive mantra about dwarfs and carpets), that his fascination with Hollywood was mutual (providing pathos, glamour and a screen test for meditation purposes), that he had a violent temper (good excuse for intercutting between jollity and brutality), that he became obsessed with Virginia Hill (juicy hardbitten role for ex-Grifter Annette Bening), and that he "invented" Las Vegas (shrine of all gamblers). Only the facts, it would seem, have been amended, elided and enhanced to protect the

audience from disaffection.

Adopting a Siegel to suit himself, Beatty does all the things he does best, twinkling with a perplexed innocence, boyishly part-cocky, partly, confident that women and the world will quickly see things his way, puzzled when they don't. This is the loquacious, word-savouring idealist of *Reds*, the crusader of *Dick Tracy*, combined with the blithe bank robber of *Bonnie and Clyde*. Losing Siegel entirely during the astonishing birthday-cake sequence, Beatty turns Joker in an enormous chef's hat, running from daughters and wife to phone calls about his disappearing mistress while a roomful of gloomy hoods await his attention downstairs. This outbreak of farce, *Shampoo* played as film noir, is as diverting as anyone could wish, but it chokes off the Siegel story in mid-message, converting it instead into a variety show: Beatty as seducer, Beatty as victim, Beatty as beast, Beatty as comedian.

On the other hand, *Bugsy* is also the work of Barry Levinson, a writer-director of reliable reticence, unaccustomed to intrude on his chosen narratives. If one at least expects from a Levinson film a high degree of accuracy in costume and setting, he has responded to the opportunities of *Bugsy* with elegance, enjoyment and intricate detail: one notes that the famous landmark, way off in the background, even reads 'Hollywoodland'. The Levinson of *Diner* also has a more significant dialect to offer: the conversational flow around the conference table. *Bugsy* is a film of many splendid tables, but in the Siegel drama, with its pitched battles of vocabulary, Levinson finds an equivalent, too, for the comical civil war he examined in *Tim Men*, with its stumbling groups of adversaries urgently pursuing the ultimate deal.

In the end, perhaps, the prime directive of Toback's writing – in which his amorous entrepreneurs challenge the angel of death and are destroyed by her (in the form, say, of Nastassia Kinski or Molly Ringwald) – has survived intact. Even his affection for sudden bursts of popular music, such as the "Shoop-Shoop Song" or "Suzy Darlin'", when everything stops for the sake of the beat, finds its place in the film's affectionate indulgence in the big-band sounds of Johnny Mercer, Kay Kyser and Margaret Whiting. If the Siegel story, the more one studies it, dwindles beside those of his more interesting contemporaries – George Raft, Virginia Hill, Meyer Lansky – it remains, with its tantalising confection of history and myth, an enthralling affirmation of everything Toback has ever wanted to put on film.

Philip Strick

Certificate
15
Distributor
Warner Bros
Production Company
Collett/Dozoretz
Productions
For Touchstone
Pictures
In association with
Silver Screen
Partners IV
Executive Producers
Teri Schwartz
Anthea Sylbert
Producers
Michael Finnell
Wendy Dozoretz
Ellen Collett
Co-producer
Mary Agnes Donoghue
Production Associate
Jody Jupiter Margolis
Production
Co-ordinators
Mara McSweeney
NY:
Ingrid Johanson
Unit Production
Managers
David Coatsworth
NY:
Celia D. Costas
Location Managers
Beth Boigon
NY:
Daniel Strol
2nd Unit:
Joseph Iberti
Casting
Deborah Aquila
Toronto:
The Casting Associates
Extras:
Scott Mansfield (NY)
Bernie Styles (NY)
Assistant Directors
Tony Lucibello
Walter Gasparovic
Grant Lucibello
Anne-Marie Ferney
NY:
Tony Adler
Martha Lee Mericka
Daniel Strol
2nd Unit:
Randy Barbee
Screenplay
Mary Agnes Donoghue
Derek Saunders
Story
Mary Agnes Donoghue
Director of
Photography
Jack N. Green
Colour
Eastman Colour;
prints by Technicolor
2nd Unit
Photography
Peter Norman
Camera Operators
Andy Chmura
NY:
Cary Fisher
Steadicam Operator
David Crone
Editors
Neil Travis
Additional:
Lisa M. Citron
Production Designer
Andrew McAlpine
Art Directors
Gregory P. Keen
NY:
Christopher Nowak
Set Decorator
Gordon Sim
Set Dresser
Richard Ferbrache
Art Consultant
Monica Smith
Fine Art Specialist
Joan Krawcyk
Scenic Artists
Tim Murton
Matthew Lammerich
Storyboard Artist
Philip Mayor
Special Effects
Co-ordinator
Martin Malivoire

Music
Thomas Newman
Orchestrations
Thomas Pasatieri
Music Editors
Bill Bernstein
Additional:
William Kaplan
Songs
"And Then I Wondered
If You Knew" by Denny
Zeitlin, performed
by The Denny Zeitlin
Trio; "Euzkadi" by and
performed by Steve
Erquiaga; "Give in to
Love" by and
performed by Mark
Bell; "Earth Angel"
by Dootsie Williams,
performed by The
Penguins; "Blues
for the Mrs" by and
performed by Will
Kaplan; "World Gone
Strange" by and
performed by Andy
Summers; "Dis-moi,
Dis-moi" by Mitsou,
Celine Labelle, Richard
Buck, performed by
Mitsou; "Possession"
by Maurice Starr,
performed by Rick
Wes; "Kuini Ripeka"
by Tama Huata,
performed by The
Maori Dancers
Costume Design
Linda Matheson
Wardrobe
Supervisor:
Karen Renaut
Women:
Arlene Coffey
Men:
Jim Roberts
Goldie Hawn's
Costumers
Tracey Lee Sidney
NY:
Rose Trimarco Cuervo
Make-up Artists
Key:
Irene Kent
Goldie Hawn:
Hiram Ortiz
NY:
Lori Hicks
2nd Unit:
Joseph A. Campayno
Title Design
Saxon/Ross Film Design
Titles/Opticals
Cinema Research
Corporation
Supervising
Sound Editor
David Bartlett
Sound Editors
Thierry J. Couturier
Allan Bromberg
Warren Hamilton Jnr
Jane Carpenter Wilson
Pat Bietz
Lily Diamond
Marvin Walowitz
Douglas Mountain
Ron Bartlett
Supervising
ADR Editor
Nicholas Korda
ADR Editor
Stephen Purvis
Supervising Foley
Editor
Matthew Harrison
Foley Editor
John Duvall
Sound Recordists
David Lee
Walter A. Gest
Greg G. Gest
NY:
James Sabat
Music:
John Vigran
ADR Recordists
David Boulton
Bruce R. Bell
Foley Recordist
Gary Hecker
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Donald O. Mitchell
Michael Herbick
Frank Montano

Foley Artists
Ellen Heuer
Christopher Moriana
ADR Voices
Cassie Cole
Andy Goldberg
Bruce Hedgeman
April Holguin
Richard Livingston
Curt Lowens
Lois Maslow
Walter Maslow
Annette McCarthy
Sally Rainer
Stephani Ryan
Pepe Serna
Jill Taggart
Sunni Walton
Adam Wylie
Office Production
Assistant
Kimberly Chipman
Stunt Co-ordinator
Branko Racki
Stunts
Ken Bates
Marco Bianco
Shane Cardwell
Dwayne McLean
Dawn Stofer-Rupp
John Stoneham Jnr

Cast
Goldie Hawn
Adrienne Saunders
John Heard
Jack Saunders
Ashley Peldon
Mary Saunders
Robin Bartlett
Charlotte
Tom Irwin
Harvey Schwartz
Amy Wright
Evelyn Wade
Jan Rube
Tomasz Kestler
Kate Reid
Rosalie
Francesca Buller
Lillian
Damon Redfern
Maltre d'
Charles Kassatly
Waiter
Beatrice Straight
Adrienne's Mother
George R. Robertson
Adrienne's Father
Maia Filar
Carol Gingold
Anaés Granofsky
Ellen
Heidi Von Palleske
Mrs Peabody
Stanley Anderson
Detective Kinsella
Peter Stevens
Ron
Eve Crawford
Jean
Jo Perry
Museum Employee
Stephen Hunter
Tony
Nancy Cser
Harvey's Girlfriend
Vince Metcalfe
Conrad Coates
Policemen
Michael Copeman
Assistant Coroner
Brenda Kamino
Mrs Dagota
Lawrence Nakamura
Mr Dagota
Bruce MacVittie
Social Security Man
Gemma Barry
Carol's Nanny
Kim Staunton
Board of Education
Woman
Laura Hawn
Evelyn's Mother
Jay Bowen
Cab Driver
Mary Kane
Cathy
Ann McDonough
Mrs Gingold
Michael Countryman
Mr Gingold

9,730 feet
108 minutes

USA 1991

Director: Damian Harris

New York art dealer Adrienne Saunders, happily married to Jack, whom she met by chance in a restaurant six years before, is shocked during an exhibition opening to find the hanged body of a restorer, Tomasz. A priceless Etruscan necklace, on which Tomasz had been working, is then found to be a fake. Subsequently, Jack, who is meant to be in Boston for an auction, is seen in a New York hotel, and Adrienne suspects him of having an affair. At Adrienne and Jack's sixth anniversary party, her colleague Harvey tells her that the fake necklace was paid for with travellers cheques in the name of Daniel Sherman – the name on a business card Adrienne earlier found in her husband's bag.

Jack is then presumed killed when his car crashes and bursts into flames. After the funeral, Adrienne's housekeeper unwittingly finds the real necklace and puts it with Adrienne's everyday jewellery. A social security officer tells Adrienne that no benefits can be paid in respect of Jack Saunders, because he died sixteen years ago; this is confirmed by a story in an old Omaha newspaper. The real necklace is innocently removed from Adrienne's house during a dressing-up game her daughter Mary plays with a friend, Carol. An inscription on Jack's high-school photo leads Adrienne to his school year book: the photo of Jack Saunders does not match, but that of a Frank Sullivan does.

Frank's ex-girlfriend, Evelyn, tells Adrienne that the outgoing Jack and the quiet Frank were great friends, and that when Jack died, Frank disappeared. Adrienne visits Jack/Frank's estranged mother, Rosalie, who is completely indifferent. Adrienne's apartment is then ransacked and her housekeeper half-strangled. Rosalie Sullivan invites Adrienne to visit, but on arrival Adrienne finds Jack/Frank waiting for her. He admits to having



Self reflecting: Goldie Hawn

taken over the life of the friend he always wanted to be, and claims that he is being blackmailed by Daniel Sherman, who knew him as Frank Sullivan. He admits to killing Tomasz, to cover up the substitution of a fake necklace for the real one.

At the address given for Daniel Sherman on the business card she found, Adrienne finds her husband's confused other wife, Cathy, surrounded by packing cases. Cathy phones Jack/Frank/Daniel and, when Adrienne cuts in, he says he will exchange their daughter, Mary, whom he has abducted, for the real necklace. Having retrieved the necklace from Carol, Adrienne confronts and stabs her husband in their apartment. Pursued into a partly refurbished neighbouring apartment, Adrienne is finally cornered in a lift. As her husband lunges for her and the necklace, he plunges to his death down the lift shaft; Adrienne is perched on a ledge inside.

British director Damian Harris follows up his tepid adaptation of Martin Amis' *The Rachel Papers* with a visually interesting but essentially made-to-order thriller. This is a vehicle for moderately talented egomaniac Goldie Hawn, whose character's point-of-view the audience shares for much of the film – except for two key moments. Before Jack is 'killed' in the car crash, a meeting with an unidentified man signals the likelihood that the charred body found in the crashed car is not Jack's. Also, when Adrienne visits Rosalie Sullivan but finds Jack/Frank there instead, we see (but she does not) his mother's body on the bed, with a plastic bag over her head.

While this tends to undermine any sense of mystery, it does lay the groundwork for the eventual – one might say inevitable – shift into 'woman-in-jeopardy' thriller. John Heard is quiet, sensitive, loving and likes children – all sure signs that he is too good to be true. Following Jack's death and the subsequent shocking revelations, we enter a new phase, the most interesting in the film, as Adrienne ponders her own dilemma and identity crisis: "If he [Jack] isn't who I think he is, who am I?"

Sadly, once Jack ceases to be a ghostly presence lurking in the shadows, and reappears in the flesh, the need to stimulate the audience's pulse rate takes precedence, and the emotional credibility of the film evaporates. The *Sleeping with the Enemy*-style finale is a surefire crowd-pleaser, but contains nothing to compare with the existential shock when Adrienne discovers that her dream man is precisely that, a figment of her romantic imagination.

Nigel Floyd

Certificate
12
Distributor
Warner Bros
Production Company
Touchstone Pictures
In association with
Silver Screen
Partners IV
Executive Producer
Edward S. Feldman
Producer
Laura Ziskin
Co-producer
Michael S. Glick
Production Associates
Sandy Isaac
Danna Blesser
Production Co-ordinator
Laura "LT" Tateishi
Unit Production Manager
Michael S. Glick
Location Managers
Janice Polley
Lori Balton
Casting
Lynn Stalmaster
Associate:
Michael Orloff
Extras:
Central Casting
Assistant Directors
Dennis Maguire
David N. Schrager
Screenplay
Robert Caswell
Based on the book
A Taste of My Own Medicine by
Ed Rosenbaum
Director of Photography
John Seale
Colour
Technicolor
Camera Operator
M. Todd Henry
Editors
Bruce Green
Lisa Fruchtman
Associate Editor
Fabienne Rawley
Production Designer
Ken Adam
Art Director
William J. Durrell Jnr
Set Decorator
Gary Fettes
Set Dressers
Donald Kaeding
Mychal Bates
Eric A. Hulett
Kurt V. Hulett
Carl J. Cassara
Special Effects
Co-ordinator:
Frank Ceglia
Foreman:
Arthur M. Brewer
Surgical Prosthetics Designers
Joe English
Noah Austin
Music
Michael Convertino
Music Director
Artie Kane
Orchestrations
John Neufeld
Music Editor
Kenneth Wannberg
Songs
"Big Girls Don't Cry"
by Bob Gaudio, Bob
Crew, performed by
Frankie Valli and the
Four Seasons; "Why
Don't We Get Drunk
and Screw?" by and
performed by Jimmy
Buffett; "Everything's
Got a Time" by and
performed by Willie
Dixon; "Witch Doctor"
by Ross Bagdasarian;
"Up on the Roof" by
Carole King, Gerry
Goffin; "Strange
Angels" by and
performed by
Laurie Anderson;
"Be Bop for Boo" by
and performed by
Royal Crown Revue;
"Tristeza Guajira"
by Ramon Cabrera,
performed by
Guillermo Portabales;
"Nostalgia Guajira"

by and performed by
Guillermo Portabales
Costume Design:
Joe I. Tompkins
Supervisor:
Margo Baxley
Costumers
Michael Castellano
Leslie Weir
Julie Lynn Glick
Make-up Artists
Leonard Engelman
Matthew W. Mungle
Title Design
Robert Dawson
Titles/Opticals
Cinema Research
Corporation
Supervising Sound Editor
Jerry Ross
Sound Editors
Dave Kulczycki
Jim Matheny
Stu Bernstein
Hugo Weng
Rodger Pardee
Cindy Marty
Frank Smathers
ADR
Supervisor:
George Berndt
Editor:
Mary Andrews
Foley Editors
Joe Dorn
Michael Dressel
Johnathan Kline
Sound Recordists
Jim Tanenbaum
Music:
Armin Steiner
ADR Recordists
Riley Steele
Charlene Richards
Bob Baron
Foley Recordists
Greg Orloff
Randy Singer
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Gary Bourgeois
Scott Millan
Adam Jenkins
Foley Artists
Dan O'Connell
Alicia Stevenson
Ellen Heuer
Medical Technical Co-ordinator
Donna Cline
Medical Consultant
Martin K. Gelbard
Medical Advisers
Cardio-thoracic:
Barry Esrig
Anesthesiology:
Keith Polk
Radiation:
Carol D. Sutton
Operating Room:
Susan Schelling Long
Kathleen Curtin
William Hurt:
Cary Kaufman
ENT:
Eric Pinczower
Heart Transplant:
Steven Gundry
Orthopedics:
Clayton Patchett
MRI:
Ross Eto
Production Assistants
Vincent Palmo Jnr
Sally J. Duerr
Kacy Lyn Magedman
Joseph E. Lotito
Heather DeBenedictis
Matt Billet
Muhammad Abdullah
Megan Derry
Kathleen Renee White

Cast
William Hurt
Dr Jack McKee
Christine Lahti
Anne McKee
Elizabeth Perkins
June
Mandy Patinkin
Murray
Adam Arkin
Eli
Charlie Korsmo
Nicky
Wendy Crewson
Dr Leslie Abbott
Bill Macy
Al Cade
J.E. Freeman
Ralph
William Marquez
Mr Maris
Kyle Secor
Alan
Nicole Orth-Pallavicini
Sarah
Ping Wu
Jay-Jay
Tony Fields
Roger
Brian Markinson
Michael
Maria Tirabassi
Lonnie
Ken Lerner
Pete
Bruce Jarchow
Tim
Keith Polk
Joe
Nellye Leonard
Nancy
Richard McKenzie
Mr Richards
Denis Heames
Young Patient
Sue Rihl
Shirley
Brandyn Artis
Nurse Jane
Millie Slavin
Carrie
Nancy Parsons
Laurie
John Marshall Jones
Anthony
Laurie Latham
Kristin
Adam Wylie
Joey
Stephen Moore
Dominic
Cynthia Mason
Barbara
Breon Gorman
Joey's Mother
Renee Victor
Lucy
Gregor Hesse
Max
Fran Bennett
Admissions Secretary
Zoanne LeRoy
Ward Nurse
Jonathan Kohl
Anesthesiologist
Ross Eto
MRI Technician
Michael O'Dwyer
Builder
Karen S. Gegan
Dr Abbott's
Receptionist
Lillian Hurst
Mrs Maris
Rosa Maria Briz
Mr Maris' Mother
Steven Gundry
Heart Transplant
Surgeon
Akuyoe
June's Nurse
Jusak Bernhard
Record Clerk
Nicholas Frangakis
Priest
Matthew T. Clancy
Jeris Poindexter
Doctors in Hallway
Derek van Longshore
Orderly
Gail Neely
Lily Mariye
Woodrhy Alexander
Susan Schelling Long
OR Nurses

11,057 feet
123 minutes

USA 1991

Director: Randa Haines

Dr Jack McKee is a successful surgeon who teaches his students to remain detached from their patients' problems. Worried by a persistent cough, he is examined by the equally detached Dr Leslie Abbott, who diagnoses a malignant laryngeal tumour. While undergoing tests in hospital, he witnesses patients being treated badly by staff. On a course of radiation treatment, Jack meets June, a young woman dying from a brain tumour that could have been treated if she had been properly diagnosed on her initial examination. When his tumour fails to respond to radiation, Jack impulsively takes June on a trip to the desert, irritating his wife Anne, who has always resented his keeping her emotionally at arm's length.

When Dr Abbott proposes to operate on him, Jack resists and asks Eli, an associate he has always patronised for his caring attitude, to perform the operation. His complacency shaken by recent events - including June's death - Jack refuses to testify for his partner Murray in a malpractice hearing. Eli performs the operation, successfully removing the tumour. While still unable to speak, Jack reconciles with Anne. Emerging from the experience as a more involved doctor, Jack insists that his students spend three days as patients in the hospital in order to learn what it feels like.

The Doctor is a medical soap opera which is elevated above the status of a disease-of-the-week TV movie by William Hurt's dedicated attempt to make his shallowly conceived character into a rounded individual. He succeeds in putting over Jack McKee as neither too cartoonishly hateful at the outset, when he callously sings along to "Big Girls Don't Cry" while performing

an operation, nor too glutinously reformed at the finish, when he attempts to rewrite the terms of his relationship with his wife.

Among a number of formulaic sub-plots, the business of Jack's partner Murray's malpractice suit is as banal as the almost identical thread in Mike Nichols' similar medical trauma movie *Regarding Henry* - though one is led to wonder whether Jack's abandoning his best friend over a debatable moral issue is any better than his patronising behaviour towards his vulnerable patients. An especially irritating running gag concerns Jack's attempts to get a stuffy nurse to sing along with a raunchy Country and Western song, "Why Don't We Get Drunk and Screw?" The predictable punchline has the woman turning up at his own operation and joining in with the words as Jack goes under.

For the most part, the film plods through its predictable story, focusing too much on Jack at the expense of the terminally ill June. Elizabeth Perkins matches Hurt in the angry sensitivity of her performance, despite a letter-from-beyond-the-grave that finishes the movie on another wrong note. Randa Haines, who previously directed Hurt in *Children of a Lesser God*, concentrates on building up a subtly scary picture of the hospital system that might have come from the novels or films of Michael Crichton, while the white and black décor and clinical machinery recalls the Gothic paraphernalia of Mike Hodges' *The Terminal Man*.

In the end, though, *The Doctor* is scuppered by its script, which glosses over the underlying reasons for Jack's original philosophy of detachment. We are left with a hero whose apparently glowing future is put in some doubt by the fact that he is now likely to go into crisis every time one of his patients dies.

Kim Newman



Heal thyself: William Hurt, Christine Lahti

La Fracture du myocarde (Cross My Heart)



Home alone: Sylvain Copans

Certificate
PG
Distributor
Mayfair Palace
Production Companies
Belbo Films/
Antenne 2/
Canal +/La SFP
With the
participation of the
Centre National de la
Cinématographie
Producers
Ludi Boeken
Jacques Fansten
Co-production
Executive
SFP:
Arlette Guibert
Production Manager
Eric Dussart
Assistant Directors
Michel Acerbo
Sandrine Ray
Delphine Dajen
Marie Madec
Screenplay
Jacques Fansten
Director of Photography
Jean-Claude Saillier
In colour
Camera Operator
Jean-Bernard Aurouet
Editor
Colette Farruggia
Production Designer
Gilbert Gagneux

Music
Jean-Marie Sônia
Song
"Princez-moi" by
J. Fansten, J. M. Senia,
performed by
Philippe Kelly
Costume Design
Hélène Martel
Wardrobe
Anne-Marie
Percevault
Make-up
Amélie Vinson
Sound Editor
Jules Dantan
Sound Recordist
Joël Faure
Sound Effects
Laurent Lévy
Stunts
Philippe Guégan

Cast
Sylvain Copans
Martin
Nicolas Parodi
Jérôme
Cécilia Rouaud
Marianne
Delphine Gouttman
Hélène
Olivier Montié
Antoine
Lucie Blossier
Claire
Kaldi El Hadj
Dédé
Mathieu Poussin
Nicolas
Wilfried Flandrin
Mozart
Romuald Jarny
Pierrot
Benoît Gautier
Julien
Wilfried Blin
Olivier
Dominique Lavanant
Claire's Mother
Jacques Bonnafe
Pince à vélo
François Dyrek
Titanic
Christine Prieur
Madame Haudray
Jacques Brunet
Headmaster
Maurice Benichou
Neighbour
Catherine Hubeau
Dodoche
Renée Cousseau
Marianne's Mother
Maurice Frydland
Marianne's Father
Michel Pilorge
Nicolas' Father
Laurence Imbert
Nicolas' Mother
Huguette Hatier
Jérôme's Mother
Didier Lastere
Director of Orphanage
Gérard Croce
Judge
Cyrille Gaudin
Nurse
Jean-Louis Boutevin
School Supervisor
and the children of
Val d'Husine de la
Forté-Bernard
School

9,419 feet
105 minutes

Subtitles

France 1990

Director: Jacques Fansten

Twelve-year-old Martin is behaving strangely. He doesn't join in with his pals' pranks and his insolent attitude to the teachers soon lands him with his third pink slip: an automatic three-day suspension. After school, his best friends Jérôme and Antoine find him at home, sitting beside his mother's corpse. It seems she died suddenly two days ago, and the fatherless Martin didn't know what to do.

To avoid explaining the delay in reporting the death, and horrified by the prospect of an orphanage, the boys resolve to bury her themselves. It proves a difficult operation: a suitable plot has to be found, and a coffin... A classmate, Claire, supplies them with a wooden box of approximately the right specifications – a broken grandfather clock. The boys take her into their confidence, and she in turn brings in her older brother, who helps them transport the clock and supplies a shovel or two.

Soon the conspiracy takes in half the class – all anxious to help Martin stay out of the orphanage. With due reverence, a funeral ceremony is improvised in an empty field (the children have sneaked out at night and borrowed an unloved stepmother's car for a hearse). The children provide Martin with supplies from their own homes, and successfully forge his mother's signature on a letter to fix a meeting with the principal. At the appointed hour, the school is thrown into chaos by a bomb scare, and the principal thinks no more about it when Martin says his mother could not wait.

To safeguard against more unwarranted intrusions, everyone helps Martin with his schoolwork. His marked improvement surprises the teachers. But despite such resourceful efforts, it is only a matter of time before someone becomes suspicious. When the authorities begin to probe, Martin moves to a hideout. The police are called in and the coffin is unearthed. Martin writes to his friends from an orphanage. It is not so bad once you learn how to defend yourself, he says. His misses his schoolwork. Things will be different when they are grown up...

Given its striking, unsettling premise, *Cross My Heart* is a surprisingly restrained, subtle piece of work. Director Jacques Fansten – hitherto unknown outside France – takes pains to establish a low-key, naturalistic ambience from the outset: the credits appear over an everyday classroom scene, with the pupils enthusiastically chanting an intriguing nonsense song ("Punch

him; pinch him. Show him life is just a game. Are you ever certain that it ends with the night? How can you know when it's really over?"). The setting is a grey, nondescript provincial town with a grey, nondescript school; and as one of his pals observes, "Martin's house is nothing to write home about" either. Fansten does not feel the need to supply any other perspective on this recognisably anonymous world: there is no overlay of nostalgic reminiscence, no voice-over. It is the kids' film, and the lessons here are all implicit.

Fansten's unaffected, self-effacing direction mirrors the resourceful pragmatism of the children. Presented with a corpse – a dead mother – they respond with a sharing of received wisdom, natural curiosity and sympathy, but they all know a *fait accompli* when they see one. Only Marianne, an orphan herself, cries. The rest are preoccupied with more immediate concerns: how to save Martin from the orphanage, how to dispose of the body, how to keep the adults in the dark? It isn't that altruistic impulses are alien to the grown-ups, indeed, the adults we see tend to be sympathetic – teachers, a social worker, foster parents – but that nurturing has been gravely distorted institutionally and constitutionally.

The epilogue leaves no doubt that the kids' fear of the orphanage was well-founded. "It's not so bad once you learn to defend yourself", insists Martin. "Luckily I managed to steal a knife and now I'm getting some respect". In contrast, making up the rules as they go along, the kids form a group that is mutually supportive (if hardly self-sufficient). As the confederacy spreads, old adversaries become friends. Hélène, the class swot, reveals an unexpected flair for fantasy and escapism, and Nicolas, whose parents employed Martin's mother as a cleaning lady, is forgiven their capitalist tyranny.

Much of the pleasure of *Cross My Heart* derives from the kids' ingenuity under pressure and the way their conception of the adult world shapes this. To satisfy the school principal, they forge a contrite letter from Martin's mother and throw in a beating for good measure. As much as it is a comedy, this is also a low-key suspense picture. As one child says, "It's like Alfred Hitchcock. Something always pops up!" It is only when Fansten tries to push the suspense towards a climax (as the net closes around Martin) that he slips into Famous Five territory and sacrifices emotional credibility. But this is a brief lapse in a remarkably assured, rigorous film. Steven Spielberg has acquired the remake rights.

Tom Charity

Reviews

The Doctor
La Fracture du myocarde

Certificate

U

Distributor

Columbia TriStar

Production Company

Amblin

Entertainment

Executive Producers

Dodi Fayed

Jim V. Hart

Producers

Kathleen Kennedy

Frank Marshall

Gerald R. Molen

Co-producers

Gary Adelson

Craig Baumgarten

Associate Producers

Bruce Cohen

Malia Scotch Marmo

Production Associates

Lee Gottsegen

Sarah Bowman

Production Controller

Bonne Radford

Production Office**Co-ordinator**

Diana Tinkley

Unit Production Manager

Gerald R. Molen

Location Manager

Stuart A. Neumann

Post-production Supervisor

Martin Cohen

Post-production Co-ordinator

Michelle Fandetti

Casting

Janet Hirshenson

Jane Jenkins

Michael Hirshenson

Extras:

Ivy Weiss

Voice:

Mickie McGowan

Assistant Directors

Bruce Cohen

Carla McCloskey

Ronnie Chong

Kate Davey

Screenplay

Jim V. Hart

Malia Scotch Marmo

Story

Jim V. Hart

Nick Castle

Based on the stage

play *Peter Pan* and

stories by J. M. Barrie

Director of Photography

Dean Cundey

Colour

DeLuxe; prints

by DeLuxe and

Technicolor

Camera Operator

Raymond Stella

Visual Consultant

John Napier

Video

Ian Kelly

Playback Operator:

Randy McDonald

Visual Effects Supervisor

Eric Brevig

Special Visual Effects

Industrial Light and

Magic

Producer:

Kimberly K. Nelson

Production Executive:

Jim Morris

Post-production

Executive:

Ed L. Jones

Production

Co-ordinators:

Rae Ann Griffith

Judith Weaver

Kim Bromley Carson

Anne Calanchini

Optical Photography

Supervisor:

John Ellis

Digital Effects

Supervisor:

Bruno George

Plate Photography

Supervisor:

Michael Owens

Post-photography

Supervisor:

John Knoll

Key Photographer:

Kim Marks

Camera Supervisor:

Bruce Walters

Bluescreen Unit:

(Unit Manager)

Edward T. Hirsh

(Additional

Photography)

Charles Schuman

Thomas Marshall

(Gyrosphere

Technician)

Richard Burton

Motion/Wing

Supervisors:

Charlie Clavatscher

Patrick T. Myers

Supervisor:

Wes Ford Takahashi

Animation:

Gordon Baker

Andrew Haldeman

David Cutler

Anthony Stacchi

Victor Jimenez

Paul Johnson

Computer Graphics

Supervisor:

Stefen M. Fangmeier

Editor:

Michael Gleason

Art Director:

Harley Jessup

Matte Artist

Supervisor:

Mark Sullivan

Digital Scanning

Supervisor:

Joshua Pines

Storyboard Artist:

Iain McCaig

Modelshop

Supervisor:

Lorne Peterson

Rotoscope Supervisor:

Jack Mongovan

Opticals:

Jon Alexander

Keith Johnson

Kenneth Smith

Jeff Doran

James Lim

Selwyn Eddy III

Bob Fernley

Pat Repola

Lori J. Nelson

Debra Wolff

Jennifer Lee

Tom Rosseter

Peg Hunter

Nelson Hall

Mike Ellis

Tim Geideman

John Whisnant

Digital Department:

Robert Weaver

David Biedny

Steve Price

Jim Hagedorn

George Murphy

Jeffrey B. Light

James Price

John Horn

George H. Joblove

Suella Kennedy

Joel Aron

Michael Conte

Jonathan Ackley

Carolyn Rendu-Ensele

Kathleen Beeler

Sandy Houston

Matte Artists:

Yusei Uesugi

Rocco Gioffre

Chris Evans

Eric Chauvin

Computer Graphics:

Jonathan French

Tom L. Hutchinson

Ellen Poon

Rachel Falk

Leah Anton

Diana Gorsiski

Dave Carson

Models:

Tony Sommers

Barbara Affonso

Ease Owyneung

Jean Bolte

Keith London

Michael Cummins

Richard Miller

Giovanni Donovan

Jeffrey Wilkins

Rotoscope:

Debra Balmum

Tom Bertino

Cindy Canejo

Lisa Drostova

Terry Molatore

Ellen Mueller

Production Assistants:

Kristen D.

Niederholzer

Stephanie S. Jaffee

David Tanaka

Sound Recordists:

Joseph Geisinger

Henry W. Garfield

Editors

Michael Kahn

Additional:

William Goldenberg

Production Designer

Norman Garwood

Art Directors

Andrew Precht

Thomas E. Sanders

Set Design

Henry Alberti

Thomas Betts

Joseph Hodges

Peter J. Kelly

Joseph G. Pacelli Jr

Jacques Valin

Junior Set Designer

Nathan Crowley

Set Decorator

Garrett Lewis

Production Illustrators

Edward C. Eyth

Thomas W. Lay Jr

David Lowery

Jacques R. Rey

Sculptures

Yarek Alfer

Special Effects Supervisor

Michael Lantieri

Special Effects Foremen:

Donald R. Elliott

Brian Tipton

Supervisor:

Thomas Pahk

Special Effects:

David B. Beasley

Steve Bunya

Randy Cabral

Kim Derry

Larry DeUnger

Garry Elmendorf

Jonathan Geiduschek

Bryson H. Gerard

Erik Haraldsted

Thomas R. Homsher

Robert L. Johnston

Louie Lantieri

Matt McDonnell

Daniel B. Ossello

Jon Porter

E. Wayne Rabouin

Thomas P. Ryba

Gregory Tippie

Production Effects Producer

Colin Wilson

Models

Adam Gelbart

Chief:

Leslie George Ekker

Modeler/**Mould Maker**

Jeffrey House

Animatronics and Puppets

Creator:

Rick Lazzarini

Consultant:

Steve F. B. Smith

Sound Re-recordists

Andy Nelson

Steve Pederson

Shawn Murphy

Andrea Lakin

Samuel F. Kaufman

ADR:

Dean M. Drabin

Foley:

Jackson Schwartz

James Ashwill

Marty Jo Lang

Foley

Taj Soundworks

John Roesch

Catherine Rowe

Kevin Bartnof

Hilda Hodges

Joseph Sabella

Jeffrey Cupernell

Advisers

Ship Riggings:

Allan Johnson

Skateboard:

Stacey Peralta

Sword:

Ted Katzoff

Dan Speaker

Jan Bryant

Production Assistants

Philip A. Aromando

Craig Barnett

Michael Fallavollita

Molly M. Mayeux

Douglas G. Meyer

David Clayton Miller

Timothy Mooney

Joe Park

Michael Pulaski

Jay Steen

Frank Thibaudeau

Stunt Co-ordinator/**Action Choreographer**

Gary Hymes

Stunts

Michael Runyard

James M. Arnett

Seth Arnett

Jophery C. Brown

Keith Campbell

Laura Dash

Bud George Davis

Donna Evans

Tabby Hanson

Tricia McFarlin-

Mattson

Larry Nicholas

Pat Romano

Keith Tellez

Kenny Alexander

Rick Avery

Perry Barndt

Dan W. Barringer

David Bartholmew

Richard L. Blackwell

Nathalie B. Bollinger

Joey R. Box

Nick Brett

Charles Brewer

James H. Burk

Bobby Burns

Richard E. Butler

Mickey Cassidy

Steve Chambers

Doc D. Charbonneau

USA 1991

Director: Steven Spielberg

High-powered lawyer Peter Banning is well-meaning where his wife Moira and children Jack and Maggie are concerned, but business constantly intrudes into his personal life: during his daughter's performance as Wendy during a school production of *Peter Pan*, and before a vital baseball game of Jack's. Peter is still attached to his cellular phone when the family makes a Christmas visit to Granny Wendy in London, on the occasion of her being honoured by the Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital for her work with orphans (of whom Peter is one). During the evening, however, evil forces invade the home, and the Bannings return to find that Jack and Maggie have been spirited away; Captain James Hook has left a challenge for Peter to reclaim his children from Neverland.

Resisting Granny's hints that he is the eternal child, Peter Pan, now grown up, Peter is spirited away in turn by a fairy, Tinkerbell, who drops him in the midst of Hook's cutthroat crew. Hook also scoffs at the idea that this middle-aged man, unable to fly, in fact afraid of heights, could be Peter Pan, and gives Tinkerbell three days to get him in shape for a war that will decide the fate of his children. While Tinkerbell enlists the Lost Boys' help in retraining Peter – with their new leader, Rufio, particularly resistant to accepting him – Hook sets about alienating his children's affections. Maggie refuses to be taken in, but Jack is susceptible to the suggestion that his father doesn't really love him.

Peter at last wins over the Lost Boys by demonstrating that he has not forgotten how to play, besting Rufio in the process. He is dismayed, however, to see how much Hook has made Jack his own son, encouraging him to hit a mighty home run in a baseball game. When he is struck by the returning ball, Peter begins to remember more of his old self. He recalls being rescued as a baby by Tinkerbell – his fear of growing up, because it inevitably meant dying, had driven him from his real mother – and taken to Neverland. He recalls his adventures with Wendy and her brothers, and how he returned for her every spring, until she grew too old, and how he fell in

love (to Tinkerbell's dismay) with Wendy's granddaughter, Moira.

Peter then recalls why he wanted to grow up, to become a father, and discovers the happy thought – his children – that enables him to fly again. While Tinkerbell regretfully accepts that now Peter will never be hers, he leads the Lost Boys in an assault on Hook's stronghold. Jack and Maggie are rescued, but Rufio is killed by Hook. Realising that Neverland will always have a hold on him while Hook still lives, Peter is driven into a final duel; he defeats the pirate, and the latter is despatched by the stuffed crocodile that once took his hand. Bidding farewell to the Lost Boys, Peter returns to London, and Moira, with his children.

For years the flitting image of Tinkerbell – the 1953 cartoon version with blonde ponytail and nite-club figure, rather than the 1991 live-action version with short-cropped red hair and sassy post-feminist manner – has scattered magic dust over the logos of Walt Disney theme parks. She is our guide to the never-never land of people-movers and rollercoasters, a bit like the character of 'figment' who tells us what imagination is, and by implication what its limits are, in the EPCOT pavilion devoted to creativity. This image of Tinkerbell could well have raised the curtain on Steven Spielberg's *Hook*, for the experience of watching it is remarkably similar to the experience of visiting a Disney resort; indeed, the series of set-pieces around which the film is structured closely resembles a map of the attractions on offer to vacationers.

SEE London-land, with snow-covered streets, neo-Victorian interiors, Westminster Abbey, the Tower of Big Ben, the rosy red cheeks of the little child-ten: "London", says Moira in all seriousness, "is a magical place for children". SEE Mermaid Lagoon, with its primly clad sirens in – a new one, this – punky colours. SEE Pirate-land, with its huge seventeenth-century galleon with skeleton figurehead, its wharfside shops and cafés ('Dick Moby's Whale Burger') and its clock tower in the form of a thirty-foot stuffed crocodile. And SEE Neverland, with its wooden skateboard ramp, food-fight area and archery range (not for Red Indians any more – that might upset some of the paying customers – but for streetwise kids from a carefully considered range of ethnic backgrounds, dressed in bamboo and palm-leaf versions of urban Space Invader outfits).

A ticket to *Hook* gets you into all these attractions, complete with reruns of the great moments from *Close Encounters* (raggy island rather



Regressing: Robin Williams...

than magic mountain), *E.T.* (fairy dust rather than a bicycle to the second star on the right), and *Jaws* (a giant crocodile this time round). Plus other Spielberg trademarks such as doors crashing open to reveal diffused light streaming in from outside; a lot of tears; and transcendental experiences, or conversions, all over the place. It's like the mixture of cartoon and live action shown in the Animation section of the Disney-MGM studio tour in Florida, where fast-talking Robin Williams confesses that he has always wanted to play Peter Pan, turns into a cartoon version of himself, then turns back again to engage in a discussion about Mickey Mouse as corporate symbol.

Above all, *Hook* is a deeply regressive experience, with a hero who retreats from the adult world of portable phones, junk bonds, difficult decisions and fear of flying into another world of theme parks (see above), happy thoughts, moral certainties, imagineering and confidence in letting himself go. The complexities of J.M. Barrie's original, where Peter Pan is described as a "poor little half and half" – a tragic figure who is both mortal and immortal, and thus condemned to perpetual loneliness – and where a musty atmosphere of Edwardian gloom pervades the proceedings, have been blown away. The boy who wouldn't grow up to marry Wendy has become the man who doesn't want to be a grown-up any more; "To die will be an awfully big adventure" has become the more positive-thinking "To live will be an awfully big adventure".

This transformation involves updating *Peter Pan* into a post-Freudian piece of New Agery (there's even an arch reference to Tinkerbell as "a complex Freudian hallucination"), and at the same time scattering the magic dust away from the story and on to the special effects and the kinetic energy. Characters are forever saying head-on things like, "You promised the children

some real time here", or "You need a mommy very, very badly", or "I wish I had a daddy like you", and there's a lot of primal screaming going on.

Robin Williams' performance is strangely narcissistic throughout, as if he were watching himself being by turns intense, child-like and innocent. He seems much more at home as the yuppie attorney, delivering lines like "I missed the 60s – I was an accountant", or, on his introduction to the Lost Boys' camp, "What is this, a Lord of the Flies preschool?" The rest of the cast manages surprisingly well to salvage some humanity among the welter of stunts and mechanised attractions: a seven-inch-high Julia Roberts, with fast-fluttering wings, is both sexy and touching; Bob Hoskins mugs away as a Cockney Smee; and Dustin Hoffman, complete with false protruding teeth, waxed moustache, outrageous English accent, and costume taken straight from the Disney cartoon version, works hard to steal the show.

Why the film is called *Hook*, though, is never explained. The pirate captain seems to represent the adult world, and those aspects of children's personalities which are self-centred and cunning. But, amid all the schmaltz and idealisation, he never quite manages to put over his point of view. *Hook* should have been the apotheosis of Steven Spielberg: he has been talking about it for years (at one stage, Michael Jackson was to play Peter), and forever telling interviewers that deep down he is Peter Pan. Instead, it's a 'filming by numbers' version of a work he has done many times before. And better. After two-and-a-quarter hours, one has to echo the reaction of novelist Anthony Hope (of *The Prisoner of Zenda* fame) to the first night of the stage version of *Peter Pan* in 1904. As the chorus of Beautiful Mothers of London rushed on to adopt the Lost Boys, he was heard to mutter, "Oh, for an hour of Herod".

Christopher Frayling



...dressing: Dustin Hoffman

J'embrasse pas (I Don't Kiss)



The loveless: Emmanuelle Béart

Certificate

18

Distributor

Gala

Production

Companies

President Films/
Bac Films/Salomé/Ciné
Cinq/Gruppo Bema

Executive Producer

Alain Centonze

Producers

Maurice Bernart
Jacques Eric Strauss
Jean Labadie

Associate Producer

Roger-André Lamieau

Production

Supervisor

Jean-Jacques Albert

Production

Managers

Catherine Chouridis
Didier Carrel

Casting Associate

Jacques Grand

Assistant Directors

Philippe Landoulsi
Catherine Puertas
Michel Nasri

Screenplay

André Techiné

Jacques Nolot

Michel Grisolia

Story

Jacques Nolot

Director of

Photography

Thierry Arbogast

In colour

Editors

Claudine Merlin

Edith Vassard

Art Director

Vincent Mateu-Ferrer

Set Decorator

Thierry Dormoy

Special Effects

Philippe Hubin

Music

Philippe Sarde

Music performed by

Flute:

Michel Sanvoisin

Cello/Violin:

Keith Hardey

Music Editor

John Temperley

Songs

"Lenda Las Sereias,

rainha do mar" by

Vincente Mattos,

Dinoel Arlindo

Velloso, performed

by Marisa Monte;

"Petite Fille" by and

performed by Las

Wampas; "Sophie de

Nantes" by François

Hadji-Lazaro,

performed by Pigalle

Costume Design

Claire Fraisse

Chief Make-up

Artist

Jean-Eric Pierre

Make-up Artist

Soraya Boulay

Sound Editor

Elisabeth Servouze

Sound Recordists

Jean-Louis Ughetto

Claude Villand

Sound Re-recorder

Jacques Lévy

Sound Effects

Jérôme Lévy

Stunts

Jean-Louis Airola

Alain Barbier

Cécile Pitel-Girard

Cast

Philippe Noiret

Romain

Emmanuelle Béart

Ingrid

Manuel Blanc

Pierre

Hélène Vincent

Evelyne

Ivan Desny

Dimitri

Christophe Bernard

Le Mac

Roschdy Zem

Said

Raphaëlle

Goupilleau

Mireille

Michele Moretti

Drama Teacher

Philippe Adam

Jean-Christophe

Bouvet

Paulette Bouvet

Kleber Bouzzone

Valéry Caucigh

Serge Caytan

Jean-Daniel Delrieux

Jacques Goujon

Martine Grimbert

Frank Kirson

Clotilde Le Grand

Marc Lemasson

Max McCarthy

Reginaldo

David Nalepka

Jorge Pereira

Françoise Pont

David Rouvelou

Xavier Schliwanski

Nathalie Schmidt

Arnaud Simon

Guillaume Vial

10,413 feet

116 minutes

Subtitles

France 1991

Director: André Techiné

Pierre decides to break away from the restrictive life of his childhood in rural South-West France and moves to Paris. He contacts the only person he knows in the city, Evelyne, a middle-aged woman he met at Lourdes. She is vague and distracted, being preoccupied by the paralysed mother with whom she lives. Nevertheless, she manages to get Pierre a job as a hospital orderly. He finds somewhere to stay and, in order to fulfil his childhood dream, buys a book on how to become an actor.

A colleague at work, Said, takes him to dinner with two middle-aged men; they are both homosexual, one of them Said's lover. Pierre is disgusted by the evening and when the other man, Romain, gives him a lift home and stops in a park that is a pick-up point for prostitutes, Pierre walks off. Evelyne takes Pierre to an expensive restaurant to make up for her earlier indifference. They return to her house, spend the night together, and Pierre moves in. He begins to attend acting classes but shows little talent. One day, after Evelyne leaves him some money, he walks out on her, feeling insulted. He goes absent from work pleading illness, is found out and sacked.

Now broke and homeless, Pierre goes back to the park where Romain took him, and sees him again. Pierre's offer of sexual favours is refused, but Romain offers to take him on a trip to Spain. Pierre accepts, but after being snubbed by Romain, who picks up someone else, he returns home. Back in Paris, he becomes a prostitute, with successful results. He meets Ingrid, another prostitute, and, after helping her when they are both arrested, falls in love with her.

They spend an idyllic day together, but Ingrid's pimp realises what is happening, ambushes Pierre with the help of some friends, and rapes him in front of Ingrid. Pierre leaves Paris and joins the paratroops; on a visit home, he tells his brother that he didn't hate the city, he just wasn't ready for it. One day, he leaves the barracks, takes off all his clothes, and wanders into the sea.

The final scene of *J'embrasse pas*, with its young hero Pierre shedding his clothes and wading aimlessly into the sea, inevitably recalls the young Antoine Doinel finding his own escape at the end of *Les 400 coups*. But while the memorable freeze frame of the melancholy Antoine was to turn into an essentially life-affirming charm in subsequent chapters, it's hard to imagine a similar outcome

to André Techiné's bleak rites-of-passage tale. The malaise which permeates *J'embrasse pas* is relentless; there is never any doubt that Pierre's sad attempt to escape the monotony of provincial life will end disastrously in the violent, loveless streets of modern-day Paris.

This is hardly fresh territory, yet Techiné's film scores in the essentially unsentimental way Pierre's downfall is charted. Although he shows an enterprising ability to improvise during his early days in the capital, it does not take long for his resources to become depleted. A tentative ambition to become an actor is soon revealed to be nothing more than a superficial, adolescent fantasy. He purchases a 'how to' book in a supermarket, struggles humiliatingly in a local acting class, and in one well-observed scene practises "To be or not to be" as he ambles alone by the Seine: what should be a perfect poetic moment for the young existential hero is rendered completely banal by his lack of feeling for the lines.

Broke and demoralised, Pierre (a finely judged performance by Manuel Blanc) becomes a kind of hapless lightning rod, drawing all the insecurities of the big city's victims, from Hélène Vincent's sad picture of middle-aged yearning to Emmanuelle Béart's feisty young prostitute. Surprisingly, the film's greatest weakness is Philippe Noiret's homosexual television star Romain, who wants to protect Pierre from the corrupt and venal world with which he has himself become over-familiar. Noiret's world-weary expressions and downbeat delivery are in serious danger of lapsing into cliché, and the nuggets of cynical wisdom scattered through his exchanges with Pierre ("Not looking back is the strength of youth"; "No lofty pleasure cannot be reduced to prostitution") sit awkwardly within this superficial liaison.

There is little to make us believe in Noiret's role as sympathetic would-be mentor, and the emotional core of the film is dissipated in a series of gloomy encounters with little sense of development. After the admittedly powerful rape scene, Techiné has his fallen hero join the paratroops so he can "leap into space", and follows this with his angst-ridden skinny-dip. The overload of metaphors hides the lack of a substantive conclusion; Pierre will presumably return to Paris, older and toughened, to add his street-wisdom to a city which has already seen too much brutality. Techiné provides no clues as to how the world might look if one could really wash away one's bitterness in the Mediterranean.

Peter Aspiden

Certificate
PG
Distributor
First Independent
Production Company
Castle Rock
Entertainment
In association with
New Line Cinema
A Granite Pictures
production
Producers
Dan Lupovitz
W. D. Richter
Co-producer
Gary Daigler
Production
Co-ordinator
Sharon Morov
Unit Production
Manager
Gary Daigler
Location Managers
Richard Davis Jnr
Ron Carr
Casting
Terry Liebling
Extras:
Bill Dance Casting
Extras Santa Fe:
Sally Jackson
Assistant Directors
Katterli Frauenfelder
Christine Larson
Screenplay
Mark Andrus
Director of
Photography
Peter Sovo
Colour
Deluxe; prints by CFI
Camera Operators
Joseph K. Marquette
Dustin Blauvelt
Video Playback
Video Image
Associates
Editors
Richard Chew
Robert Leighton
Production Designer
Lilly Kilvert
Art Director
John Warnke
Art Department
Researcher
Samara Schaffer
Set Design
Dawn Snyder
Set Decorator
Rosemary
Brandenburg
Set Dressers
Nancy Booth
Gary Brewer
Storyboard Artist
Jeff Balsmeyer
Special Effects
Co-ordinator
Stan Parks
Special Effects
Kevin Quibell
Roger Lifsey
Tim Moran
Todd Jensen
Music
David Mansfield
Executive Music
Supervisor
Stephen R. Goldman
Music Editor
Allan K. Rosen

Songs
"Could This Be Magic"
by Hiram Johnson,
Richard Blandon,
performed by The
Dubs; "You'll Lose
a Good Thing" by
Barbara Lynn Ozen,
performed by Barbara
Lynn; "Hello Stranger"
by and performed
by Barbara Lewis;
"A White Sport Coat
(and a Pink
Carnation)" by and
performed by Marty
Robbins; "Burning
Love" by Dennis Linde,
performed by Elvis
Presley; "Frosty the
Snowman" by Steve
Nelson, Jack Rollins;
"Just Look at Us"
by Dewese, Barber,
Lewis, La Vaba, Isaacs,
performed by Party
Posse; "Long, Lonely
Nights" by L. Andrews,
B. Davis, performed by
Lee Andrews and the
Hearts; "Bewitched"
by Lorenz Hart,
Richard Rodgers,
performed by Doris
Day; "(I Love You) For
Sentimental Reasons"
by Deek Watson,
Derek Best, performed
by Linda Ronstadt
Costume Design
Aggie Guerard
Rodgers
Costume Supervisor
Chuck Velasco
Set Costumer
Kelly Lindquist
Key Make-up Artist
Steve LaPorte
Make-up Artist
Edouard F.
Henriques III
Titles/Opticals
Cinema Research
Corporation
Supervising
Sound Editor
John Benson
Sound Editors
Lucy Coldsnow
Simon Coke
Noah Blough
Supervising
ADR Editor
Jessica Gallavan
Supervising
Foley Editor
E. Jeane Putnam
Foley Editor
Thomas O'Shea
Sound Recordists
Art Rochester
Music:
Joel Moss
ADR Recordist
Doc Kane
Foley Recordist
Bruce R. Bell
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Terry Porter
Mel Metcalfe
David J. Hudson
Denis Blackerby
Sound Effects
Editor
John Morris
Additional
Sound Effects
Bob Grieve
Foley Artists
Robin Harlan
Sarah Monat
Production
Assistants
Cynthia Marcus
Michele D'Angelo
Tom Esty
Pamela Parisi
Stunt Co-ordinator
Jeff Smolek
Stunts
Dane Farwell
Steve Kelso
A. Michael Lerner
Stand-ins
Steve Hornyak
Bob Howe

Cast
Brian Wimmer
Willie Husband
Peter Berg
Frank Lovegren
Marcia Gay Harden
Joy Husband
Colleen Flynn
Jessica Husband
Kyle Secor
Leland Shakes
Michael Beach
Dr David Arrington
Peter Gallagher
Bob Freeman
Cassy Friel
Little Jessica Husband
Ross Maling
Little Donald Freeman
Steven Schwartz-
Hartley
Dwane Gardener
John Prosky
Officer Tom Bostich
Bo Brundin
Dr Dan Chilblains
Donald Hotton
Dr Chris Underwood
Billy Vera
Radio DJ
Jeremy Roberts
Truckdriver
Silent Bit Sam
Waving Man
Janeane Garofolo
Counter Girl
Steve Hornyak
Man in Bathroom
Susan Bugg
Portable Phone
Woman
Tom Noga
Crazy Man in Hospital
Maria Rubell
Nurse Lilly
Emily Kuroda
Nurse Ruth
Tim Kelleher
Catering Truck Man
Collett Lawson
Ron Byron
Kissing Couple
Robert Howe
Man at Money
Machine
Patricia Finn-Lee
Susan
Drew Snyder
Albert
Aimee Aro
Amy
Jon Paul Steuer
Little Frank
Hudson B. Marquez
Harry's Voice
Richard Steinmetz
Donald Freeman
Deborah Swanson
David Shinney
Antique Shoppers
Bunker
Bear
Bear
Bunker

8,373 feet
93 minutes

USA 1991

Director: W.D. Richter

1962: Willie Husband, living in Santa Fe with his wife Joy, his small daughter Jessica, and Joy's mentally deficient brother Frank, is having trouble keeping up payments on his house. When a foreclosure is served, he goes with Frank to see the mortgage-holder, property developer Bob Freeman. Freeman, who wants to redevelop the area, contemptuously offers to buy him out. Willie storms off, but discovers half-way home that Frank has got Donald, Freeman's unhappy young son, in the car. Willie phones Freeman and fixes a meeting to return the boy. But Freeman shows up with an armed henchman, and tells Willie that he and Frank are wanted for kidnapping.

In a scuffle, Willie is wounded and the henchman seemingly killed. Leaving Donald behind, Willie and Frank make off in the car; seeing police at their house, they keep on driving and eventually reach Pomona, California. With Willie groggy from his wound, Frank seeks help from Dr Dan Chilblains, who learns their story and sees them as ideal subjects for his cryonics experiment. Persuading Frank that after "one night's sleep" all their troubles will be over, he freezes them in suspended animation.

1991: An accident cuts off the electricity in Chilblains' laboratory, and Willie and Frank thaw out, no older than before. Believing that only a night has passed, they make their way back to Santa Fe. But their experiences en route, at a hospital and a fast-food outlet, lead Willie to realise what has happened. While Frank still struggles to understand, Willie discovers that Joy, now in her late fifties, has been remarried and divorced.

Unable to face her, he instead seeks out Jessica, who has married Donald Freeman and has children of her own. After initial disbelief, she accepts that he is her father. The next morning, Willie visits Joy. At first she refuses to believe him, then will have nothing to do with him. But at last

he convinces her that his love for her has not changed, and the whole family is reunited.

Late for Dinner splices elements from two played-out Hollywood cycles of the 80s – the time-jump movie (*Back to the Future*, *Peggy Sue Got Married*) and the age-swap movie (*Big*, *Vice Versa*). This cross-breeding, though, engenders nothing very exciting since, having set up its central premise, the film soon runs embarrassingly short of ideas as to what to do with it. The above synopsis in fact gives a slightly misleading idea of the action, as the cryonic 'sleep' comes only some thirty minutes into the film. But while the first third of the movie is packed with over-contrived plotting (why would Willie, having found Donald in his car, not take him straight back rather than fix a meeting in some remote spot?), the remaining hour simply leaves the main characters to run, one after the other, through all the predictable stages of confusion, disbelief, alarm and acceptance.

Along the way, some enjoyable gags are built on Willie and Frank's bemused reactions to the world of 1991 (even if at least one joke, involving Ronald Reagan and *Cattle Queen of Montana*, is shamelessly lifted from *Back to the Future*). At one point, Frank finds himself in an establishment called The Big Bad Wolf Burger Bar, faced with a range of options with names like 'The What Big Teeth You Have Monster Feast'. "Do you have one like meat on a bun?" he enquires hopefully.

This aspect, though, and diverting character traits like Frank's passion for measuring everything with a battered pocket-rule – "He won't eat much", he explains about the hijacked Donald, "he's only 41 inches" – are steadily eroded in favour of a facile sentimentality. The film ends with Joy agreeing to resume her life with the husband who is now barely half her age – which is just the point where a really interesting movie might have started.

Philip Kemp



Killing time: Brian Wimmer, Peter Berg



Willem Dafoe...

Certificate
15
Distributor
Guild
Production Company
Grain of Sand Productions
Executive Producer
Mario Kassar
Co-executive Producer
Ronna B. Wallace
Producer
Linda Reisman
Co-producer
G. Mac Brown
Production Co-ordinator
Shell Hecht
Production Manager
Diana Pokorny
Location Manager
Andrew D. Cooke
Casting
Ellen Chenoweth
Extras:
Sylvia Fay
Assistant Directors
Glen Trotiner
Dean Garvin
Screenplay
Paul Schrader
Director of Photography
Ed Lachman
Colour
DuArt
Camera Operators
Dick Mingalone
Craig Dibona
2nd Unit:
Bruce MacCallum
Steadicam Operator
Dave Knox
Opticals
R/Greenberg Associates
Editor
Kristina Boden
Production Designer
Richard Hornung
Art Director
Jim Feng
Art Department Co-ordinator
Julie Fabian
Set Decorator
Jessica Lanier
First Set Dresser
Anthony Baldasare
Set Dressers
Mike Leather
Diana Burton
Special Effects Co-ordinators
Steven Kirschhoff
Mark Bero

Music/Music Performed by/ Music Producer
Michael Been
Music Supervisor
Alex Steyermark
Music Video Consultant
Sande Borgman
Songs
"24-7-365" by Agami, Belmaati, Christiansen, Moller, performed by Wizdom-N-Motion; "Twisted" by Child, Warren, Roberts, performed by Kane Roberts
Associate Costume Design
Ellen Ryba
Wardrobe Provided by
Giorgio Armani
Wardrobe Supervisors
Barbara J. Hause
Winsome McKay
Make-up Artist
Marilyn Carbone
Title Design
Balsmeyer & Everett, Inc
Supervising Sound Editor
Maurice Schell
ADR Editor
Wendy Hedin
Sound Recordists
Danny Michael
Music:
Joel Jaffe
ADR Recordist
David Boulton
Foley Recordist
George Lara
Sound Re-recordist
Mel Zelniker
Sound Effects
Eugene Gearty
Foley Artists
Elisha Birnbaum
Brian Vancho
Key Production Assistants
John Paul Riva
Production Assistants
David Harris
David Janssen
Chris Swartout
Greg White
Office:
Deborah Wolpert
Paul Schrader
H. Michael Otano
Josh Dorsey
Stunt Co-ordinator
Jery Hewitt
Film Extract
Scorpio Rising (1963)
Stunt Cable
Peter Bucossi

Cast
Willem Dafoe
John LeTour
Susan Sarandon
Ann
Dana Delany
Marianne
David Clennon
Robert
Mary Beth Hurt
Teresa Aranow
Victor Garber
Tis
Jane Adams
Randi
Paul Jabara
Eddie
Robert Cicchini
Guidone
Sam Rockwell
jealous
René Rivera
Manuel
David Spade
Theological Cokehead
Steven Posen
Hasid
Ken Ladd
Carlos
Brian Judge
Thomas
Vinny Capone
Young Cuban
Christopher Todd Northrup
Retro Yuppie
Paul Stocker
Maitre d'
Bernadette Jurkowski
Tatiana von Furstenberg
French Girls
Francesca Bonicoli
Elena Vannucci
Models
Jeff Telvi
Male Model
Jennifer Fowler
Gabrielle Stubbett
Women at Bar
James Saxenmeyer
Bar Patron
Raymond Normandeau
Chef
Arcoiris Medina
Woman at Laundromat
Esteban Fernandez
Concierge
Carolyn L.A. Walker
Policewoman
Timothy Stickney
Young Dominican
Joe Gironda
Funeral Home Employee
Heather Rose
Dominic
Dominic Crackhead
Paul Stockman
Smith
Radio Announcer
Peter Macklin
Billy Joe Novinski
David Sukoff
Damien Corrente
Baseball Card Fans
Ronald Sylvers
Prison Guard

9,255 feet
103 minutes

USA 1991

Director: Paul Schrader

Forty-year-old John LeTour delivers phone-order drugs to a wealthy white clientele around Manhattan. His boss is his old friend Ann, who plans to go straight by opening a natural cosmetics company with her other employee Robert, a venture in which John can summon no interest. Disturbed by the growing sleaziness of the drug scene and by news that a young society girl has overdosed on high-grade cocaine, John takes a stern line with his more obviously self-destructive clients. A chance meeting with one-time girlfriend Marianne (who says she is off drugs but disbelieves his assertion that he is too) reawakens John's memories of his youth and focuses his anxieties about his future. He consults professional psychic Teresa Aranow, who tries to encourage him.

He bumps into Marianne again at St Luke's Hospital while delivering valium to Swiss playboy Tis; she and her sister Randi are looking after their mother, who is undergoing chemotherapy for cancer. Reluctantly agreeing to talk to John, Marianne rejects his claim that they were once formally married and reminds him of his irresponsibility when they lived together. When John returns to the hospital, however, Marianne takes him to her apartment and they make love, blissfully. But afterwards she tells him she will never see him again.

Ann and John are embarrassed to discover that each is affectionately concerned about the other's future. John spots an undercover cop shadowing Tis and himself; when challenged, the cop contemptuously denies any interest in John's drug deliveries but demands information about the death of the society girl. John learns that Marianne's mother has died and goes to the funeral parlour, but Marianne hysterically drives him out. Delivering cocaine to Tis in the Grace Towers penthouse, John is shocked to find a drug-addled Marianne, who shortly afterwards plummets to her death. When this is reported as a suicide plunge from an empty apartment, John calls the cop to tell him that the apartment was not empty, then goes to East Harlem to buy a gun.

Next time Tis calls Ann for a delivery, John's extreme reluctance to go shakes Ann. She agrees to accompany him to Tis' new hotel, where Tis himself hides, leaving two armed bodyguards to accuse John of alerting the police to the high mortality rate among Tis' girlfriends. Ann tries to raise help while John shoots both the guards and Tis in self-defence, sustaining only light injuries himself. In prison, John

awaits an expected light sentence. Ann visits him, and they finally admit to each other that they are in love.

Light Sleeper is evidently the film that Schrader alluded to in the book *Schrader on Schrader*: "You have these two characters, the man and his room - I love the kind of movies that are about those two. *Pickpocket* is like that, *Diary of a Country Priest* is, *A Man Escaped* is. In fact I have a new idea which I haven't written yet about an older character in his forties - another man and his room movie". Schrader has spoken elsewhere about his enthusiasm for directors like Kubrick whose films never resemble each other (as against the Hitchcocks and Fords whose films fit recurrent genre templates), and so it's faintly disappointing to find that this latest version of a profane man's more or less inadvertent quest for redemption should be so reminiscent of its antecedents in the Schrader filmography.

John LeTour has a too-obvious kinship with Travis Bickle and Julian Kay, taxi driver and gigolo, and almost everything he does (from writing a forthright diary to driving from one brief encounter to the next) seems over-familiar, as if Schrader's capacity for reinventing his themes were running near empty. That said, *Light Sleeper* is interesting as a return to the formula of 'the man and his room' after Schrader's useful detours into directing scripts by others (*Cat People*, *Patty Hearst*, *The Comfort of Strangers*). The seeming paradox that other people's stories and scripts turned out to be just as 'personal' to Schrader as anything he had come up with himself - which is perhaps just another way of saying that 'personal' attitudes and preoccupations are often thrown into sharper relief when they have to confront other personalities, other ideas - has led Schrader to a broader and more objective perspective on the man, the room and the ultimate redemption.

Where *Taxi Driver* made little or no sense unless seen from the perspective of Travis Bickle and *American Gigolo* cheerfully subordinated all sociological credibility to the central issue of Julian Kay's inability to accept love, *Light Sleeper* is patently born of a desire to engage with certain realities of the 1990s. This is not to say that Schrader has turned social-realist. New York may or may not sustain real-life operations like Ann's cosy little enterprise, purveying "white drugs to white people", but neither Susan Sarandon's sexily maternal Ann nor Willem Dafoe's street-wise-but-naive John impresses as a character filched from the Narcotics Bureau files. Both of them are in the

film primarily as cyphers for mid-life crisis: both have junkie pasts that their present line of business doesn't allow them fully to live down, and both are acutely aware of the need to make a fresh start.

For Ann, this means switching from vegetable products to inhale up the nose to vegetable products to spread on the skin; she sees herself as New York's answer to Anita Roddick of the Body Shop chain. For John, who can spot an undercover cop at ten yards but needs a Harlem hood to teach him how to fire a .38, it means more simply getting a firmer grip on reality. Some of the bewildered passivity of Colin Mayhew (the Rupert Everett character in *The Comfort of Strangers*) seems to have rubbed off on John, who starts out by far the least active and self-aware of all Schrader's protagonists. (Schrader charmingly underlines his essential childishness by showing us a page of lists in his diary: "People whose eyes don't match", "People who are left-handed".)

The film interweaves three strands of narrative as it charts his growth to a kind of maturity. First, his growing sense that he has a responsibility to stop his customers from destroying themselves. Second, his Dante-esque pursuit of a 'false' Beatrice in the person of Marianne, a figure who *pretends* to have left her past behind. (The newspaper report of her death plunge from Grace Towers is headlined, inevitably, "FALL FROM GRACE"). Third, his shift from seeing Ann as a 'caring' den mother, shackled up asexually with her gay employee Robert, to regarding her as an ally and, finally, as a life partner. For all its awkward similarities to the ending of *American Gigolo* (itself derived from the ending of Bresson's *Pickpocket*), the closing scene in the prison visiting room does achieve a measure of the longed-for 'transcendence': it works by

retrospectively redefining the entire film as a love story between characters who never even dreamed that they might be in love.

John's decidedly profane and unheroic path to redemption is littered with tiny signs of the sacred, from the title (derived from the New Testament, the press-kit helpfully advises) to various proper names. In this resolutely secular world, the role of 'priest' falls to the professional psychic Teresa, who sees John at two moments of crisis and reassures him that his 'luck' hasn't yet run out; the Marlene Dietrich character had a similar-but-converse role in *Touch of Evil*. What's missing from the film – as explained in the location report in *Sight and Sound*, October 1991 – is a Bob Dylan soundtrack: "Songs full of that Biblical, apocalyptic imagery and with all that Rabbinical soulfulness". The gap is not adequately filled by Michael Been's contributions, which plough through a series of hard-rock-lyric clichés in a sub-Springsteen drawl. Some of Been's backing tracks have an appealing perversity (sort of Brian Eno goes to Nashville), but the music is undoubtedly the film's weakest link.

The visual style, on the other hand, is extremely persuasive. Schrader and Ed Lachman reportedly looked at old Antonioni movies before the start of shooting (a source they acknowledge with a direct swipe from *L'Eclisse* in the hospital cafeteria scene), but their clean, hard-edged compositions and fluid camera movements have a precision and spontaneity that doesn't seem in any way second-hand. Perhaps it's a sign of Schrader's new-found ability to transcend the limitations of his own protagonists that there's a new, unflashy confidence about the way he uses images and colours to shape his tale.

Tony Rayns



...Susan Sarandon: at long last love

My Own Private Idaho

Certificate
18
Distributor
Electric Pictures
Production Company
New Line Cinema
Executive Producer
Gus Van Sant
Co-executive Producer
Allan Mindel
Producer
Laurie Parker
Line Producer
Tony Brand
Production Co-ordinators
Amanda Brand
Mary Ann Marino
Italy:
Allesandra Ravenna
Office:
Teresa Tamiyasu
Production Managers
Italy:
Paolo Tinari
Unit Production Manager
Paul Helleman
Location Managers
Sara Burton
Seattle:
Vicky Berglund
Casting
Sandy Collister
Extras:
Central Extras Casting
Yvonne Couture
Donald Campeau
Seattle Extras:
Patti Kalles
Assistant Directors
Kris Kregel
David Minkowski
Italy:
Phred Palmer
D-J Haanraads
Screenplay
Gus Van Sant
Additional dialogue by
William Shakespeare
Directors of Photography
Eric Alan Edwards
John Campbell
Special Photography
Bruce Weber
In colour
Visual Effects
Co-ordinator:
Thomas Arndt
Crew:
Chel White
Steve Warner
Janet Karecki
Kathleen Nichols
Laura Di Trapani
Karen E. Hout
Editor
Curtiss Clayton
Production Designer
David Brisbin
Art Director
Ken Hardy
Set Decorator
Melissa Stewart
Set Dresser
Daniel Self
Lead Scenic Artist
Anne Hyvarinen
Storyboard Artist
Arnold Pander
Richard Waters' Paintings
Anton Kimball
Mechanical Effects
The Illusion Works
Joe Henry Schmeer
Venora DeBrowolski
Music
Bill Stafford
Music Performed by
Yodeler/Accordion:
Sandy Gernhart
Vibraphone:
Richard McNutt
French Horn:
Dorothy Rust
Whistler:
Donald Granger
Saw:
Richard Meyers
Violin:
Hollis Taylor
Viola:
Kim Burton
Cello:
Lori Presthus
Dulcimer/Synthesizer:
Jamie Haggerty
Hurdy Gurdy/Tar:
Jean Poulot

Banjo:
Elliot Sweetland
Richard Letcher
Vernon Dunn
Recorders:
Bruce Van Buskirk
Pedal Steel Guitar:
Bill Stafford
Music Arrangements
Additional:
Jean Poulot
Songs
"Cattle Call" by Tex Owens, performed by Eddy Arnold; "America the Beautiful" by Samuel A. Ward, "Home on the Range" by Daniel E. Kelley, Dr Brewster M. Higley, performed by Bill Stafford; "Deep Night" by Charlie Henderson, performed by Rudy Vallee; "Bachu Ber" performed by Jean Poulot, Jamie Haggerty; "Mr Klein", "Der Adler" by and performed by Tom Dokoupil; "Too Many Colours" by and performed by Aleka's Attic; "Ovoniam Ipse" by Thomas Stoltzer; "Nun Freut Euch" by Gaspar Othmayer, performed by Bruce Van Buskirk; "Cherish" by and performed by Madonna; "When the Saints Go Marchin' In" by J. M. Black, performed by Elliot Sweetland, Richard Letcher, Vernon Dunn; "Blue Eyes" by Elton John, Gary Osborne, performed by Elton John; "The Funerals" by Anthony Holborne, performed by Lori Preshus, Hollis Taylor, Kim Burton; "The Old Main Drag" by Shane MacGowan, performed by The Pogues; "Getting into the Outside" by and performed by Conrad "Bud" Montgomery
Costume Design
Beatrice Aruna Paszter
Wardrobe Supervisor
Vanessa Vogel
Make-up
Key:
Gina Monaci
Titles
Chas. Bruce
Supervising Sound Editor
Kelley Baker
Sound Editors
Peter Appleton
Patrick Winters
Michael F. Newman
Sound Recordists
Reinhard Stergar
Seattle:
Robert Marts
Jan Cyr
Italy:
Jon Huck
ADR:
Forrest Brakeman
ADR/Foley:
W. Wayne Woods
Music:
Scott Hybl
Rob Farley
Ultra stereo
Consultant:
Bruce Murphy
Sound Re-recordists
Music:
Paul Sharpe
Bill Sheppard
Walla Group
Scott Patrick Green
Jessie Thomas
Mike Parker
Shaun Jordan
Bryan Wilson
Wade Evans
Vana O'Brien
Eric Hull

Foley
Karen Karbo
Steve Miller
Research Consultant
Jake Culver
Production Assistants
John Brown
Matt Ebert
Chris Lowenstein
Italy:
Lorenzo Dalla Vedova
Post:
Teresa Tamiyasu
Animal Handler
Anne Gordon
Cast
River Phoenix
Mike Waters
Keanu Reeves
Scott FAVOR
James Russo
Richard Waters
William Richert
Bob Pigeon
Rodney Harvey
Gary
Chiara Caselli
Carmella
Michael Parker
Digger
Jessie Thomas
Denise
Flea
Budd
Grace Zabriskie
Alena
Tom Troupe
Jack FAVOR
Udo Kier
Hans
Sally Curtice
Jane Lightwork
Robert Lee Pitchlynn
Walt
Mickey Cottrell
Daddy Carroll
Wade Evans
Wade
Matt Ebert
Scott Patrick Green
Tom Cramer
Coverboys
Vana O'Brien
Sharon Waters
Scott Patrick Green
Shaun Jordan
Shawn Jones
Café Kids
George Conner
Bad George
Oliver Kirk
Indian Cop
Stanley Hainesworth
Dirtman
Joshua Halladay
Baby Mike
Douglas Tollenen
Little Richard
Stephen Clark
Pachosa
Hotel Manager
Lannie Swerdlow
Disco Manager
Wally Gaarsland
Mark Weaver
Conrad "Bud"
Montgomery
Rock Promoters
Pat Patterson
Steve Vernelson
Mike Cascadden
Cops
Eric Hull
Mayor's Aide
James A. Arling
Minister
James Caviezel
Airline Clerk
Ana Cavinato
Stewardess
Melanie Mosely
Lounge Hostess
Greg Murphy
Carl
David Reppinhausen
Yuppie at Jake's
Tiger Warren
Himself
Massimo De Cataldo
Pao Pei Andreoli
Robert Egon
Paolo Baiocco
Italian Street Boys
Mario Stracciarolo
Mike's Italian Client
9,356 feet
104 minutes

Director: Gus Van Sant

On an empty and endless road in Idaho, Mike, a rent boy who suffers from narcolepsy, has a fit and falls asleep, dreaming of his mother. Back in Seattle, Mike works the streets with his roster of regular male clients. One night he is picked up by a rich woman and taken home. There he meets up with fellow rent boy and friend Scott Favor, the son of the local mayor. As the woman makes advances towards him, Mike has a fit. Scott carries him into the street and leaves him there, since it is a safer neighbourhood than downtown.

The following day, Mike runs into Hans, a wealthy German who offers him a lift. Mike refuses but has another fit; he wakes up in Portland with Scott. The two hang out together and hear that Bob, the roguish leader of their street gang, is back in town. They all take over a derelict building which is subsequently raided by the police who are looking for Bob. During the raid, Scott is told that his father wants to see him, and he duly complies. Later, Scott and Mike take to the road on their motorbike in search of Mike's mother.

In Idaho, they visit Mike's brother (who is also his father) who tells them that his mother has gone to work at the Family Tree Hotel, Snake River. There they discover that she has left for Italy. Hans has meanwhile turned up at the hotel, and they sell him their bike and fly to Rome. They visit a farm outside the city where Mike's mother is supposed to be staying, but arrive to find that she has gone back to the U.S. Scott, however, falls in love with Carmella, the farmer's daughter; the pair leave Mike and return to Scott's home.

Back in Portland, Mike and Bob glimpse an elegantly dressed Scott entering a fashionable restaurant (it transpires that Scott's father has died and he has come into an inheritance). Bob challenges Scott, but the latter refuses to acknowledge him. That night Bob dies of a fever. Bob and Scott's father are buried on the same day, only yards apart. Later, Mike is back on the Idaho road; he has a fit and falls into a stupor. A truck stops and two men take his shoes. Later, a car pulls up, the driver bundles Mike's comatose body into the front seat and speeds away.

My Own Private Idaho is a giddy medley of innumerable private dreams, memories and fantasies, with the narcoleptic hero Mike (the film is preceded by a dictionary definition of this rare condition) as the ultimate American dreamer. Already exhausted at the opening credits, he starts and finishes on his yellow brick road – well, tar-black,

but punctuated with the brightest ochre – flanked by rolling corn fields and capped by a wide-awake periwinkle sky. On the soundtrack, the Country and Western song "Cattle Call" is blended with snatches of "Home on the Range" and "America the Beautiful" while a rabbit hops into the hedgerow. As Dorothy said of her own private Kansas, there's no place like home. "I just know I have been here before", contends the forsaken Mike, who is in search of that home and the mother who should live there, a mother dressed in pure fairy white who he wishes could gently cradle him in her arms.

But this is some kind of less than wonderful pastoral idyll. If the landscape has its own physiognomy, it is of a "fucked up face", while the only cowboys who roam this range are plastic model ones. Within the first five minutes, Gus Van Sant has recreated a synthetic American mythology that turns out to be the stuff of Mike's wet dreams. The film cuts to a close-up of his face in the final moments of orgasmic reverie as he is being given a blow-job by a client off-screen (*à la* Warhol) in some dingy hotel room. It brings the house down for him – literally, as a little wooden homestead plummets from the heavens into his rural fantasy. Few films in recent years have kicked off with a seam of imagery as rich as this.

And it is the cinematic texture that the director is able to sustain as he knits together a motley collection of styles, ransacking references from Western culture's collective memory – from Renaissance Rome to the Fun Factory. There is the tableau of talking gay-porn magazine covers that makes a brief and witty pop-art set-piece, and the stylised montage of chiaroscuro still-life poses of which the few sex scenes are 'tastefully' composed. The rough and grubby downtown life is meanwhile depicted in all its depressing authenticity,

with the rent-boys who serve the fantasies of others slumped in neon-lit coffee bars as they recount their less than happy experiences of life on the game – non-actors improvising from their own private memories to an accompaniment of the jukebox sentiments of Madonna.

Van Sant contrasts this with the highly formalised blank-verse speechifying of the blustering Bob Pigeon – the make-believe father/lover Falstaff to Scott's make-believe Hal – who elevates the street scene into a comic-tragic pageant that takes place in his derelict baronial hall. With much cribbing from Shakespeare's *Henry IV Part 1*, Scott and Bob self-consciously revel in this theatrical use of language, while the oft-unconscious Mike remains noticeably muted in these overblown scenes. The WASP-ish Scott toys with his fantasy rebel world on the way to succession to his real pa's throne, while Mike, the product of a white-trash family that has crumpled in on itself, in turn crumples at the very thought of his mother when she comes to him in jittery visions played on scratched and bleached-out home-movie reels.

Mike wants to be part of a normal family. "What's normal?" asks Scott. "A mom and dad, a dog and shit like that", he replies. Mike's aspirations have a kitsch romanticism to them – as kitsch as the garish family portraits that his brother/father paints for a living. But there is also a terrible pathos and deep loneliness – as deep as his frequent bouts of sleep – to Mike's desires. He loves Scott, the inveterate user, who has stated that he will only have sex with men for money. "I could love somebody else if I wasn't paid for it" says Mike in one of the most moving scenes in the film, a truly solemn moment amongst all the playfulness, and a tender and sad evocation of unrequited love in a loveless nexus of relationships.

Lizzie Francke**River Phoenix... on the yellow brick road?**

Necessary Roughness

Certificate
12
Distributor
UIP
Production Company
Paramount
Executive Producer
Howard W. Koch Jnr
Producers
Mace Neufeld
Robert Rehme
Associate Producer
Lis Kern
Production
Co-ordinators
Debbie Schwab
2nd Unit:
Lyda Blank
Unit Production Manager
Itsi Atkins
Location Manager
Janis Burkland
Location
Co-ordinator
Steve Rohn
2nd Unit Director
Allan Graf
Casting
Mindy Marin
Associate:
Allison Bauer
Extras:
Barbara Blanchette
Texas:
Rody Kent
2nd Unit Extras:
Micheline Mundo
Assistant Directors
John Hockridge
Joseph J. Kantra
Terri Martin
2nd Unit:
John M. Colwell
John G. Scotti
Screenplay
Rick Natkin
David Fuller
Director of Photography
Peter Stein
Colour
Technicolor
2nd Unit Director of Photography
Michael O'Shea
Aerial Photography
Ron Goodman
Camera Operators
Chris Hayes
Mark Van Loon
David Knox
2nd Unit:
Hank McElwee
Howard Neef
Video Displays
Video Image
Editors
John Wright
Steve Mirkovich
Wayne Wahrman
Production Designer
Paul Peters
Set Decorator
Lynn Wolverton
Parker
Set Dressers
Robert E. Alcalá
Gretchen Goetz-Healey
Edward M. Shewmake
Draughtswoman
Siobhan Roome
Production
Illustrator
Peter Lloyd
Special Effects
Jack Dale Bennett
Jack "Deuce" Bennett

Music

Bill Conti

Orchestrations

Jack Eskew

Music Supervisors

Ken Kushnick

David Passick

Set:

John E. Oliver

Music Editor

Steve Livingston

Songs

"All My Ex's Live in Texas" by Sanger D. Schafer, Lyndia J. Shafer, performed by George Strait; "What Would We Do" by Lawrence Julian, Joseph Stone, Paul Klein, performed by DSK; "Blue Hawaii" by Leo Robin, Ralph Rainger; "Fighting Ike" by Steve Dorff; "Go Bobcats" by Paul Yoder; "Texas Rangers Song" by Sam Coslow, Harry Behn; "Liza Jane" by Vince Gill, Reed Nielsen, performed by Vince Gill; "All My Rowdy Friends Are Coming Over Tonight" by and performed by Hank Williams Jr.; "I Gotta Move On" by Angela Winbush, performed by Lalah Hathaway; "The Nearness of You" by Ned Washington, Hoagy Carmichael; "There's Only One Thing Wrong with Loving You" by Benny McNeil, David Stephenson, performed by Benny McNeil

Costume Design

Dan Moore

Wardrobe

Key: Barry Kellogg Supervisor: Janet Lucas Lawler

Costumers

Nadine Reimers

Stephen Chudej

Make-up

Coree Lear

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research Corporation

Supervising

Sound Editor

J. Paul Huntsman

Sound Editors

John Haeny

Joe Earle

Dialogue:

Matthew Sawelson

Adam Sawelson

Patrick McCormick

Gary Lewis

Ralph Osborn

Supervising

ADR Editor

Mary Andrews

ADR Editor

Avram Gold

Foley Editors

Jeffrey Rosen

Jonathan Klein

Sound Recordists

Thomas Nelson

Foley:

Marty Church

ADR:

Bob Baron

Music:

Lee De Carlo

2nd Unit:

Skip Frazee

Dolby stereo

Consultant:

Steve F. B. Smith

Sound Re-recordists

Paul Massey

Robert Glass

Tom Perry



Scoring points: Larry Miller, Sinbad...

Foley Artists

Robin Harlan

Sarah Monat

Ellen Heuer

Football Technical

Adviser

Vince Costello

Production

Assistants

Jeffrey F. January

Elizabeth Arechiga

Daren Clemons

Andrea Friedman

Hoagy Carmichael

Emily Koch

Michael Phillips

Cindy Walters

Jeff Williams

Bill Porter

Carol Brzezinski

Michele Dingenary

Jeff Gehle

Cindy D. Harris

Tony Kopidlansky

Eric Northcutt

Charlotte Prine

Karina Watts

Robert Keith Walters

Debbi Spear

Barbara Casner

Joel Evans

Neil Greenberg

Nicole Y. Hatcher

Elizabeth Ladd

Keith A. L. Peden

Steve Smith

Gregory J. Weinlauf

James Willis

Stunt Co-ordinator

Allan Graf

Stunts

Curtis Lupo

Eric Norris

Dick Dial

Cotton Mather

Sandy Berumen

Danny Epper

Randy Fife

Lynette Gowrie

Jeff Jensen

Rusty McClennon

Gary Morgan

Rex Pierson

Ben Scott

William Washington

Holly Ricker

Steve Buster

Bill McIntosh

Diamond Farnsworth

Steve Hart

Pamela Minick

David S. Rowden

Gerard Williams

Bull Wranglers

Bo Jameson

Rick Wilson

Cast

Scott Bakula

Paul Blake

Hector Elizondo

Coach Ed Gennero

Robert Loggia

Coach Wally

Riggendorf

Harley Jane Kozak

Suzanne Carter

Larry Miller

Dean Elias

Sinbad

Andre Krimm

Fred Dalton

Thompson

Carver Purcell

Rob Schneider

Chuck Neiderman

Jason Bateman

Jarvis Edison

Andrew Bryniarski

Wyatt Beaudry

Duane Davis

Featherstone

Michael Dolan

Eric "Samurai"

Hansen

Marcus Giamatti

Sargie

Kathy Ireland

Lucy Draper

Andrew Lauer

Charlie Banks

Louis Mandylor

McKenzie

Peter Navy

Tuasosopo

Manumana

Drew Kahn

Popke

Spencer Snow

Olaf Knudsen

Scott Snow

Ingmar Knudsen

Chris Berman

Himself

Dick Butkus

Earl Campbell

Roger Craig

Ben Davidson

Tony Dorsett

Evander Holyfield

Ed "Too Tall" Jones

Jim Kelly

Jerry Rice

Herschel Walker

Randy White

Convict Football

Players

Tom Whitenight

Flat-top

Raul Flores

Jayhawk Linebacker

Sidney Karlos

Bradford

Sidney "Doberman"

Harris

Coquina Dunn

Bessie

Debra Carroll

Dawne

Garrett Schenck

Grant Edison

Rodger Boyce

Sheriff Woods

Geoff Garza

Manuel

Agustin Solis

Ranch Hand

Dennis Parker

Prison Guard

Randy Tallman

Doctor Sayre

Desi Doyen

Nurse

Darryl Cox

Referee

Kimberly Figge

Aerobics Instructor

Ken Locker

Athletic Trainer

H. Bud Otto

ESPN Production

Manager

Tommy Baker

Football Dropout

Dave Tanner

Pianist

Spencer Prokop

Waiter

Scott Thompson

Michael Petty

Space Cadets

Allan Graf

Billy Bob's Bartender

Lee Gideon

James Edward

Savage

Bobby Griffin

Phil M. Sewell

Boosters

Donald R. Collins II

Scott Davis

John L. McGill

Dan D. Brook

Football Players

9,720 feet

108 minutes

USA 1991

Director: Stan Dragoti

The American college football circuit is scandalised when drugs and recruitment infringements result in a blanket ban on national champions, the Texas State University Armadillos. Former TSU coach and current TV sports analyst Ed Gennero is hired as the college's new chief trainer, with longtime associate Wally Riggendorf as his assistant. The pair are faced with the daunting task of cobbling together a new Armadillos team from the student body rather than the usual special football scholarship holders. Despite an unimpressive open trial and scorn from Dean Elias, who unscrupulously attempts to frustrate the footballers' progress, Riggendorf persuades thirty-four-year-old Paul Blake to resume the studies and playing career he dropped as a freshman.

With a team drawn from misfits of various nationalities, and limited numbers compelling the players to take part in both offensive and defensive formations, the Armadillos' morale slumps when they are defeated in their first eight games. Some self-respect is regained in a bar-room brawl with local rivals the Texas Colts, after which Blake's journalism lecturer Suzanne Carter sets the seal on their blossoming romance by recalling the unrequited schoolgirl affection she felt for him in her senior year.

Although taking their first points in a draw gained courtesy of the team's only female member Lucy Draper's soccer-style kicking skills, the Armadillos are up against it as they square up for the season's final contest against the highly fancied Colts. However, the corrupt dean is fired, coach Gennero returns from hospital when his suspected heart attack is diagnosed as indigestion, and the complex moves the team have practised in training at last



...Scott Bakula

come together on the field. Blake himself carries the ball over the line to score the last-minute points which secure victory.

Although Channel 4's American football coverage has created a growing awareness of the game among British TV viewers, unfamiliarity with the sport's rules, technical jargon (the source of this film's title) and associated personalities may leave cinema audiences on this side of the Atlantic at a disadvantage. A full understanding of the climactic encounter, for instance, requires detailed knowledge of the points scoring system. And the comic impact of casting actual football icons as the tough prison team enlisted by the conniving dean in the hope of injuring our heroes during training is somewhat diminished if we fail to recognise their real identities.

The *raison d'être* of sports films is to exploit the ready-made dramatic impact of the relevant occasion. However, the clichéd plotting of this particularly routine example fails to replicate the unpredictability of course and outcome which provides the spectator's pleasure in the game. It's all too obvious that the sequence introducing the female soccer player's kicking facility will be followed in the next game by her name on the scoresheet. The same goes for the wide receiver's eventual success at holding on to a scoring pass at a significant moment in the big game, when earlier we've witnessed his fumbling on the practice pitch.

The longer *Necessary Roughness* goes on, the more it reveals a tension between the narrative constraints of formula movie-making and the anything-can-happen appeal of the subject matter. There is a perfunctory kind of entertainment in mentally ticking off the genre's staple components – if the coach is on medication, you can almost be certain a hospital bed beckons just before the crucial contest – but the absence of the tiniest deviation from the tried-and-tested template greatly reduces one's involvement.

Perhaps aware of such shortcomings, the film-makers hedge their bets by including an element of broad comedy (jokey asides from the commentary box, farcical stereotyping of the Australian and Samoan members of the team) which sits rather uncomfortably with the straight on-field heroics. The dependable Robert Loggia supplies a brief flash of passion with a rousing half-time pep talk, otherwise there's little to merit the auteurist aspirations of the opening credit: "A film by Stan Dragoti".

Trevor Johnston

Certificate
18
Distributor
UIP
Production Company
Zanuck Company
For MGM-Pathé
Communications
Producer
Richard D. Zanuck
Associate Producer
Gary Daigler
Production
Co-ordinator
Cynthia Streit
Unit Production
Manager
Gary Daigler
Location Manager
Craig Busch
Casting
Shari Rhodes
Extras:
Tanya Sullivan
Assistant Directors
Katterli Frauenfelder
Martha Elcan
Jeanne Caliendo
Eric Wall
Screenplay
Pete Dexter
Based on the book by
Kim Wozencraft
Director of
Photography
Kenneth MacMillan
Colour
DeLuxe
Camera Operator
Don Reddy
Steadicam Operator
Greg Lunsgaard
Video Technicians
John Johns
Debo Cox
Special Visual
Effects
Available Light Ltd
Supervisor:
John T. Van Vliet
Optical Composites
Beverly Bernacki
Animator
Candy Lewis
Editor
Mark Warner
Production Designer
Paul Sylbert
Set Decorator
Phillip Leonard
Set Dressers
Francine Lauzon
Jerry Lowe
Scenic Artist
Roderick Nunnally
Special Effects
Co-ordinator
Bruno Van Zeebroeck
Music
Eric Clapton
Music Director/
Orchestrations
Randy Kerber
Music Co-ordinator
Hillary Bratton
Music Supervisors
Becky Mancuso
Tim Sexton
Music Editor
Jeff Carson
Songs
"Tears in Heaven",
"Help Me Up" by
Eric Clapton, Will
Jennings, performed
by Eric Clapton;
"Wang Dang Doodle"
by Willie Dixon,
performed by Terrell;
"Bridge of Sighs" by
and performed by
Robin Trower; "I Fall
to Pieces" by Hank
Cochran, Harlan
Howard, performed
by Patsy Cline;
"Wasted Days and
Wasted Nights" by
Huey P. Meaux,
performed by Freddie
Fender; "Baby, Scratch
My Back" by Slim
Harpo, performed
by Terrell; "Free Bird"
by Allen Collins, Ron
Van Zandt, performed
by Lynyard Skynyrd;
"Knockin' on Heaven's

Door" by and
performed by Bob
Dylan; "Rock and Roll
Hoochie Koo" by Rick
Derringer, performed
by Johnny Winter;
"Don't Know Which
Way to Go" by Willie
Dixon, Al Perkins,
performed by Buddy
Guy, Eric Clapton;
"Before the Next
Teardrop Falls" by Ben
Peters, Vivian Keith,
performed by Freddie
Fender; "Fire", "Love
Rollercoaster" by
Clarence Satchell,
Leroy Bonner, Ralph
Middlebrooks,
William Beck, Marvin
Pierce, Marshall Jones,
Jim Williams,
performed by The
Ohio Players; "Little
Bit Country, Little
Bit Rock 'n' Roll" by
Marty Cooper; "Love
of Mine" by Jimmy
Lands, performed by
Buddy Ace; "All Along
the Watchtower"
by Bob Dylan,
performed by Jimi
Hendrix; "Angel from
Montgomery" by John
Prine, performed by
Bonnie Raitt; "The
South's Gonna Do it
Again" by Charlie
Daniels, performed
by The Charlie
Daniels Band
Choreography
Alex Arizpe Jnr
Costume Design
Colleen Atwood
Associate:
Colleen Kelsall
Costumers
Set:
David Davenport
Kathryn Bird
Make-up
Mike Hancock
Lizbeth Williamson
Title Design
Douy Swofford
Titles
Pacific Title
Sound Design
Gary Rydstrom
Supervising
Sound Editor
Richard Hymns
Sound Editors
Dialogue:
Sara Bolder
Michael Silvers
Foley Editor
Sandina Bailo-Lape
Sound Recordists
Hank Garfield
Foley:
Christopher Boyes
Music:
Ed Cherney
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Gary Rydstrom
Gary Summers
Dennis Sands
Sound Effects
Editor
Ken Fischer
Foley
Dennie Thorpe
Marnie Moore
Technical Adviser
Chris Sonny Fresquez
Production
Assistants
Traci Caillouet
Amy Needham
Don No
Key:
Mark Gutierrez
Office:
Michael Barson
Stunt Co-ordinator
Ted Grossman
Animal Handler
Jan Hessler

Cast
Jason Patric
Jim Raynor
Jennifer Jason Leigh
Kristen Cates
Sam Elliott
Larry Dodd
Max Perlich
Walker
Gregg Allman
William Gaines
Tony Frank
Police Chief Nettle
William Sadler
Monroe
Special K. McCray
Willie Red
Dennis Letts
Senior District
Attorney
Dennis Burkley
Glenn Wilson
Motorcycle Guys
Jimmy Pickens
Man in Disco
Barbara Lasater
Yellow Rose Bartender
Toni Pilgreen
Driller's Waitress
Merrill Connally
Defence Attorney
Connie Cooper
Judge
Cynthia Scott
Yellow Rose Waitress
John Ray Harrison
Mayor
Michael Kirkland
Grand Jury District
Attorney
Willie Ellison
Police Instructor
Ron Kern
Domino Player
Tom Rosales
Wino
Suzanne Savoy
Dodd's Wife
Ken Stadler
Police Lieutenant
Gene Nash
Freddy Joe Odiorne
Niles Caldwell
Scooter Trash
Brandon Smith
Cop
Jerry King
Man in Hearse
Blue Deckert
Medical Examiner
Dell Gibson
Reporter
C. A. Terrell
Hawke Dixon
Jim Phillips
Morad
Doug Pryzbocki
"Terrell", Club Band

10,822 feet
120 minutes

USA 1991

Director: Lili Fini Zanuck

● Katterly, Texas, 1975.

Policewoman Kristen Cates, newly on the force, accepts an undercover assignment that pairs her with veteran narcotics officer Jim Raynor. Recently elected Police Chief Nettle is under pressure to do something about drug abuse, and specifically orders Raynor and Cates to make a case against William Gaines, allegedly the most important pusher in the area.

Raynor warns Cates that although they will be required to claim in court they merely simulated drug use to gain the confidence of any dealers they arrest, the only way they can actually pass in the underworld will be genuinely to use some of the drugs they purchase. Raynor and Cates, who become lovers, develop a relationship with Walker, a hustler who makes introductions to sundry other local dealers, including Willie Red, who is not willing to conclude a deal until the undercover officers have injected heroin in his presence.

Both Raynor and Cates become increasingly strung out. When Walker tells them that they are remoured to be cops, Raynor browbeats the young man into turning informer and helping to set up many of his friends. Cates, forced to take a hallucinogen by chemist Monroe, has a bad trip while driving, and resolves to clean up, but Raynor has become increasingly dependent. Nettle orders the operation shut down, and insists evidence be manufactured that will convict Gaines, who has refused to deal with the undercover cops.

All the suspects are pulled in, including Gaines. Ashamed to have turned in his friends, Walker hangs himself. While hiding out in a trailer park, Raynor and Cates are attacked by a shotgun assailant who kills Raynor. In court, as Cates is testifying against Gaines, the accused makes a gesture that signals to her he was the man with the shotgun. Cates, who has left the force, thereupon admits that the evidence against Gaines is spurious. Later, as Gaines gets into his car, he is killed by a shotgun blast from the back seat.

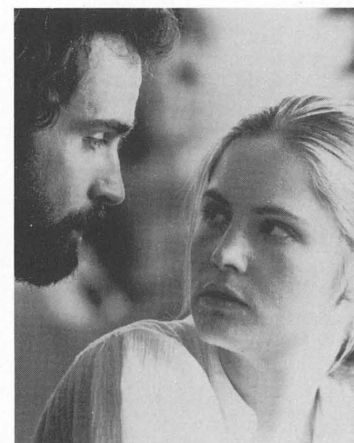
● Ex-cop Kim Wozencraft's semi-autobiographical novel was a very hot Hollywood property when it came to auction, but producer Richard D. Zanuck and director Lili Fini Zanuck insist that this movie, with a screenplay from the author of *Paris Trout*, is "a fictionalised adaptation of an already fictional work". In the event, this translates as a hammering-out of difficult material into a thoroughly conventional cop movie. Having taken a great deal of care in its

evocation of the fashions and music and general feel of the 70s drug milieu - with an especially clever use of rock-blues icon Gregg Allman as the almost silent super-dealer - the film then dwindles away in its need to turn in yet another anti-drug lecture. The film industry again exorcises its own well-publicised chemical dependence by demonising drug use to an insane degree, skipping from nasty close-ups of needles plugging into veins to strung-out, dirty-haired nervous wrecks combing the carpet for crumbs of cocaine without ever suggesting any of the pleasures, either on a personal or a social level, which might induce people to get mixed up with drugs in the first place.

This means that the sucking-in of Raynor and Cates by the world they are supposed to be destroying has to take place between scenes and never becomes remotely convincing or affecting. The first half of the movie gets by on its fine performances, with excellent cameos from Sam Elliott as the coolly understanding ex-druggie cop running the operation and Max Perlich as the nervously inadequate Walker, and flamboyantly bizarre turns from William Sadler and Special K. McCray as grotesque dealers. In particular, the sequence with Sadler's taxidermist-chemist is effectively creepy, as the tattooed redneck flirts dangerously with Cates and the cop then freaks out, in a 70s-style 'trip' sequence.

However, once the plot kicks in again, the movie quickly loses sight of its original theme of two cops who have become so caught up in the drug scene that every one of their cases falls apart when they are forced to admit in court that they have themselves taken drugs. This is abandoned in favour of a series of ridiculous contrivances, trawling up an earlier throwaway speech by Raynor about how it's a cop's duty to avenge the death of a partner to set up an unbelievable vigilante punchline that has nothing to do with the rest of the picture.

Kim Newman



Jason Patric, Jennifer Jason Leigh



Haunting hungers: k.d. lang...

Certificate

12

Distributor

Electric Pictures

Production Company

PeleMele Film

Supported by

Filmförderungsanstalt

Bundesministerium

des Innern

Bayerischer

Rundfunk/Redaktion

Dietrich v. Watzdorf

Producer

Eleonore Adlon

Line Producer

Jamie Beardsley

Associate Producer

Beverly J. Graf

Production

Co-ordinators

Elyse Katz

Berlin:

Andrea Held

Unit Production

Managers

USA:

Jamie Beardsley

Berlin:

Peter Brodhuhn

Location Managers

John James Geary

Berlin:

Frank Horsch

Casting

Seattle:

Alison Roth

Los Angeles:

Annette Benson

Alaska:

Carol Carlson

Berlin Extras:

Mechthild Olliges

Assistant Directors

Berlin:

Jamie Beardsley

Fernando Altschul

Kelly Kiernan

Cyndee L. Baudhuin

Screenplay

Percy Adlon

Felix O. Adlon

Director of

Photography

Tom Sigel

Colour

DeLuxe

Editor

Conrad Gonzalez

Production Designer

Amadeus Capra

Art Director

John Myhre

Set Decorators

Gary B. Matteson

Berlin:

Wolfgang

Kallnischkies

Set Dressers

Casey Reid

Tom Waisanen

Scenic Artist

Kenton Jones

Music

Bob Telson

Music Extracts

Theme from "Spring

Sonata" by Ludwig

Van Beethoven,

performed by Stanley

Plummer (violin), Chet

Swiatkowski (piano)

Music Performed by

John Leventhal

Roger Squitero

Bob Telson

Music Producer

Bob Telson

Songs

"Barefoot" by Bob

Telson, k. d. lang,

performed by

k. d. lang

Costume Design

Cynthia Flynt

Wardrobe

Supervisor:

Elizabeth Feldbauer

Berlin:

Regina Bütz

Simone Simon

Make-up

Key:

Pamela Peitzman

Berlin:

Waltraud Becker

Titles

Truline Graphics

Sound Design

Alan Howarth

Robert Mackston

Sound Editor

José Araujo

Sound Recordists

Pat Libenson

Foley:

Robert Deschaine

Additional Music:

John Richards

Ultra stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Matthew Iadarola

Gary Gegan

Foley

Joan Rowe

Gregg Barbanell

Production

Assistants

Susan Bucknell

David Ford

Rachel Hudgins

Alex Vachon

Stunt Co-ordinator

Jeff Janson

Stand-in

Sheila D. Fields

Helicopter Pilot

Fritz Wohlwend

Cast

k. d. lang

Kotzebue

Rosel Zech

Roswitha

Chuck Connors

Bingo Chuck

Jane Lind

Noayak

Oscar Kawagley

Butch

Wolfgang Steinberg

Albert

Christel Merian

Albert's Wife

Eugene Omiak

Ovy

Wayne Waterman

Ronnie

Alvira H. Downey

Izzy

George Barril

Bingo Attendant

Gary Albers

Tight-rope Walker

8,524 feet

95 minutes

Filmed in English

Germany 1991

Director: Percy Adlon

Roswitha, a German émigré in her forties, is a librarian at the Alaskan settlement of Kotzebue. One day, a young worker from the nearby lead mine demands information about the region but angrily rejects the books available. Claiming to be a descendant of the founders of Kotzebue, the youth reveals with a dramatic gesture that 'he' is a woman. Angry but intrigued, Roswitha lectures the intruder about the settlement's Russo-German origins and discovers that the young woman's only clue to her own identity is the name Kotzebue, scrawled on the cardboard box in which she was abandoned as a baby.

"Kotz" brings Roswitha a fresh-caught fish as a conciliatory gift; in return, Roswitha opens one of her innumerable jars of salmonberries, which have fomented to the strength of a liqueur. Slightly tipsy, Kotz wanders into the night, howling like a dog. Assisting the reluctant Roswitha with her shopping next day, Kotz takes her for a ride behind a motorised sleigh. Roswitha warms to her strange companion and talks of her own background. Twenty years ago, her husband was killed as they made their escape from East Berlin; since then, she has endured long years of loneliness at Kotzebue, cut off from her homeland and her past. Unable to restart the snowmobile, Kotz drags Roswitha on the sleigh back to the settlement; cold and furious, Roswitha demands that the girl leave her alone.

But Kotz sees on television the celebration at the destruction of the Berlin Wall, and thinks of a way to help Roswitha. She robs the office of the local bingo operator, Chuck, who catches her in the act but, on seeing the Eskimo ornaments she wears, lets her go. She buys two round-trip plane tickets to Berlin and presents them to Roswitha. They fly to Berlin, and check in at a hotel. Roswitha believes that her brother, Albert, must have alerted the authorities

to the escape attempt, and now she confronts him with the betrayal; shamefacedly, he gives her the directions to her husband's grave so that, finally, she is able to pay her last respects to her lost love.

Back at the hotel, she embraces Kotz in gratitude but recoils in alarm at the latter's ardent response; an entire night passes as she tries to explain that their friendship requires no physical passion. They return gloomily to Alaska where Roswitha, having recognised that Kotz's Eskimo ornaments are identical to those worn by Chuck's woman, Noayak, her assistant at the library, draws them to Noayak's attention. Confronted, Chuck admits it was his habit to give such ornaments to his many Eskimo girlfriends, and concedes that he may well be Kotz's father. Less than happy at this idea, Kotz returns to Roswitha's door, and knocks hopefully.

Forced to move on from the 'Marianne Trilogy' following the amiable refusal of his chunky heroine to risk self-parody in further adventures, Percy Adlon still maintains an interest in what he has suggested as an underlying theme – the interaction between the German woman and the American continent. In *Salmonberries*, his new slenderised version of Teutonic maternalism is a castaway, like her two immediate predecessors, in a remote community which tolerantly reads from her presence whatever it needs. Displaced from desert sands to Alaskan snows, such figures as the Eskimo bookworm obsessed with *Madame Bovary*, and the craggy bingo hall proprietor with a colourful past (Chuck Connors in the Jack Palance role), provide an almost transparent paraphrase of the Bagdad Café environment, amply continuing its haunting sense of hunger, inertia and timelessness.

The catalytic intruder in this instance is not in fact the German, whose spirit has become as bottled up over the years as her vast collection of salmonberries, but ▶



...Rosel Zech, k.d. lang

◀ the unclassifiable 'American' youth (part-Eskimo, part-Canadian, and part-k.d. lang, which is to say wholly unlike anyone else) who appears to have sprung from some obscure pupation. The resulting interplay is accordingly not so much between nationalities but – in a return to the partnership of *Sugarbaby* – a collusion between opposites who discover unexpectedly that they have something in common. That 'something' is not altogether clear, although it could be no more elaborate than the desire for companionship.

All they really share is their foreignness, an attribute from which Adlon has extracted much humour in the past, but here, unfortunately, treats with an excess of respect and sympathy. Having written his film specifically for the ultra-foreign k.d. lang, whose inscrutably androgynous features conceal a miraculous vocal turbulence, he has landed himself with a defiant enigma, indeterminate of age, origin and purpose. Such presence requires a more exotic fable than this mundane account of adolescent fixation, despite its tentative and implausible links with the reunification of Germany (an uneasy courtship between East and West?)

Where part of the charm of Adlon's earlier films, with their odd angles and unexpected rhythms, was the impression they gave of a hearty disregard for the rules of cinema, the disingenuous expressionism of *Salmonberries* wears that charm perilously thin. Four lightning flashes, for example, illuminate the librarian and her visitor as they stand face-to-face at an early meeting. Stoically ignored by the cast, these burn-outs clearly indicate a moment of electric recognition, but by whom, and of what, the script neither clarifies nor develops.

In isolation, though, there are sequences containing much to admire, like Roswitha's bathroom collapse amid an elaborate light-fitting and a slowly dripping tap, a splendidly disconcerting montage. There is, for the sake of droll incongruity, a nicely framed scene of a tightrope-walker balancing outside the Berlin hotel at night. And there are magnificent views of the Alaskan setting at Kotzebue itself, heavy in greys and browns, the snowmobiles buzzing through the mists, the tired houses wreathed in storms. It is ironic that in sending his two women on a seductive journey through this spectacular wilderness, accompanied by one of lang's yearning refrains, Adlon placidly incorporates shots that link his lonely dreamers first with two crosses and then with a couple of elk. It's difficult to take them seriously after that.

Philip Strick

Shining Through

Certificate

15
Distributor
 20th Century Fox
Production Company
 20th Century Fox
 In association with
 Peter V. Miller
 Investment Corp.
 Sandollar Productions
Executive Producers
 Sandy Gallin
 David Seltzer
Producers
 Howard Rosenman
 Carol Baum
Co-producer
 Nigel Woolf
Production Associate
 Laura Hintelmann
Production Supervisors
 German Unit:
 Ingrid Windisch
 Austrian Unit:
 Arno Ortmair
Production
Co-ordinators
 Deborah Harding
 German Unit:
 Gabriele Scheiger
 Austrian Unit:
 May Capsaskis
Production Manager
 Kathy Sykes
Location Managers
 Rachel Neale
 Chris Wheelton
 Richard Dunmore
 German Unit:
 Gunther Ross
 Barbara von Wrangell
 Heinz Werner
 Austrian Unit:
 Arie Bohrer
Post-production
Supervisor
 JoAnn M. Laub
2nd Unit Director
 Peter MacDonald
Casting
 Simone Reynolds
 Mary Gail Artz
 Barbara Cohen
 German Unit:
 Risa Kes
 Crowd:
 Julia Steinweg
 Marlies Pumperla
 Austrian Crowd:
 Gernot Gurth
Assistant Directors
 Don French
 Ian Hickinbotham
 Steve Millson
 2nd Unit:
 Steve Harding
 German Unit:
 Stefan Diepenbrock
 Jan Sebastian Ballhaus
 Susanne Schlaepfer
 Austrian Unit:
 Golli Marobe
 Sabine Eckhard
Screenplay
 David Seltzer
 Based on the novel
 by Susan Isaacs
Director of
Photography
 Jan de Bont
 Panavision
Colour
 Eastman Colour;
 prints by Deluxe
Camera Operators
 Peter de Bont
 2nd Unit:
 John Campbell
Steadicam Operator
 Mike Bartlett
Optical Effects
Supervisor
 Janos O. Pilenyi
Editor
 Craig McKay
Associate Editor
 Colleen Sharp
Production Designer
 Anthony Pratt
Art Directors
 Desmond Crowe
 Kevin Phipps
 German Unit:
 Konrad Albrecht
 Austrian Unit:
 Martin Dorfner
Set Decorator
 Peter Howitt
Set Dressers
 German Unit:
 Olaf Schiefner
 Austrian Unit:
 Renate Korn
Draughtsmen
 Steven Dobric
 Peter Russell

Special Effects

Supervisor
 Richard Conway
Special Effects
 Foreman:
 Bob Hollow
 Austrian Unit:
 Richard Richtsfeld
Music
 Michael Kamen
Supervising
Music Editor
 Joseph S. Debeasi
Additional Music Editor
 Patrick Mullins
Songs
 "Goodbye Dear, I'll Be
 Back in a Year" by Mack
 Kay, performed by Dick
 Robertson; "Goodnight
 Sweetheart" by Ray
 Noble, Jimmy Campbell,
 Reg Connelly, Rudy
 Vallee; "In the Mood"
 by Joe Garland; "I'll Be
 Seeing You" by Sammy
 Fain, Irving Kahal;
 "Moonlight Serenade"
 by Glenn Miller; "I've
 Got a Gal in Kalamazoo"
 by Harry Warren,
 Mack Gordon
Costume Design
 Marit Allen
Costume Supervisor
 Rosemary Burrows
Wardrobe
 Men:
 Alan Flynn
 Women:
 Claire Smith
 Jenny Hawkins
 Military:
 Philip Rainforth
 German Unit:
 Maria Dimler
 Juschka Friedemann
 Ingrid Weiss
 Constanze Donath
 Claudia Szonell
Make-up
 Chief:
 Naomi Donne
 Melanie Griffith:
 Valli O'Reilly
 German Unit:
 Viktor Leitenbauer
 Marianne Muller
 Axel Zornow
Melanie Griffith's
Character Aging
Make-up
 John Caglione Jr
 Doug Drexler
Titles/Opticals
 R/Greenberg Associates
Sound Design
 Ron Bochar
Sound Editors
 Fred Rosenberg
 Laura Civiello
 Jeffrey Stern
Supervising
ADR Editor
 Deborah Wallach
ADR Editors
 Hal Levinsohn
 Trissy Bowers
Foley Supervisor
 Bruce Pross
Foley Editors
 Frank Kern
 Steven Visscher
 Eliza Paley
Sound Recordists
 Ivan Sharrock
 Douglas L. Murray
 Sean Squires
 Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordist
 Thomas Fleischman
Sound Effects
 CS, Inc
 Vocal:
 David Sharp's Totally
 Looped Group
Foley
 Design:
 CS, Inc
 Artist:
 Marko Constanzo
German Language
Advisers
 Bernard Jaffe
 Irma Jaffe
Film Research
Supervisor
 Kati Meister
Production Assistants
 German Unit:
 Will Baum
 Austrian Unit:
 Andrea Ortmair
Stunt Co-ordinator
 Greg Powell
Stunts
 Helen Caldwell
 Tom Delmare
 Sarah Franzl
 Gerd Grzeszczak
 Paul Heasman

Sy Holland
 Eddie Kidd
 Timothy Lawrence
 Sean McCabe
 Wojtek Prygiel
 Lee Sheward
 Timoth (Tip) Tipping
Film Extract
The Mortal Storm (1940)

Cast

Michael Douglas
 Ed Leland
Melanie Griffith
 Linda Voss
Liam Neeson
 Franz-Otto Dietrich
Joely Richardson
 Margrete von Eberstein
John Gielgud
 Konrad Friedrichs,
 "Sunflower"
Francis Guinan
 Andrew Berringer
Patrick Winczewski
 Fishmonger
Anthony Walters
 Dietrich's Son
Victoria Shalet
 Dietrich's Daughter
Sheila Allen
 Olga Leiner, Margrete's
 Mother
Stanley Beard
 Linda's Father
Sylvia Syms
 Linda's Mother
Ronald Nitschke
 Horst Drescher
Hansi Jochmann
 Hedda Drescher
Peter Flechtner
Alexander Hauff
Claus Plankers
 SS Officers at
 Fishmongers
Renate Cyl
 Woman in Fishmarket
Dana Gladstone
 Street Agitator
Lorinne Vozoff
 Personnel Director
Mathieu Carriere
 Von Haefler
Deirdre Harrison
 USO Singer
Wolf Kahler
 Border Commandant
Wolfe Morris
 Translator
William Hope
 Kernohan
Nigel Whitney
Rob Freeman
 GIs in canteen
Lisa Orgolini
 Girl in Canteen
Jay Benedict
 Wisecracker in
 War Room
Thomas Kretschmann
 Man at Zurich Station
Klaus Munster
 Cab Driver
Markus Napier
 SS Officer
Constanze Engelbrecht
 Stayson von Neest
Martin Hoppe
Fritz Eggert
 German Soldiers
Ludwig Haas
 Hitler
Clement von
Franckenstein
 BBC Interviewer
Lorelei King
 Leland's New Secretary
Hans Martin Stier
 Truckdriver
Wolfgang Heger
 Bus Conductor,
 Kinderstrasse
Michael Gempart
 Man at Kinderstrasse
Hana Maria Pravda
 Babysitter
Lutz Weillich
 Train Station Guard
Wolfgang W. Muller
 Conductor
Markus Kissling
 Swiss Border Guard
Anna Tzelniker
 Cleaning Woman
Andrzej Borkowski
 German Refugee
Simon De Deney
 SS Man
Tusse Silberg
Suzanne Roquette
 Dinner Guests at
 Drescher's
Janis Martin
 Opera Singer

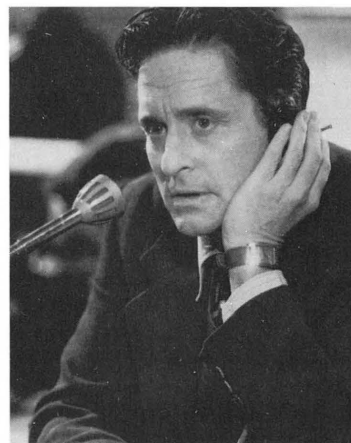
USA 1992

Director: David Seltzer

● Interviewed for a BBC television series about World War II, Linda Voss recalls how she became an American spy in Nazi Germany... 1940: The daughter of New York working-class parents (mother Irish, father German-Jewish), Linda lands a job with the War Department thanks to her fluent German. Employed as secretary to Ed Leland, a senior lawyer in the department, she realises he is a US secret agent. Ed is intrigued by her intelligence and outspokenness, and they become lovers.

After Pearl Harbour, Ed dons OSS uniform and leaves to run a spy ring from Switzerland. Linda, transferred to Washington, waits vainly for news of him. On his return she reproaches him, but they are soon reconciled. When one of Ed's Berlin operatives is killed, Linda persuades him that she can act as replacement. Ed's chief contact, "Sunflower", escorts Linda to Berlin where, with the help of an upper-class young woman, Margrete von Eberstein, she is employed as cook in the household of a Nazi official. But a dinner party for a top Wehrmacht officer, Franz Dietrich, is so disastrous that she is sacked. Dietrich, amused, takes her on as nanny to his two young children.

Ed enters Germany to urge Linda to leave. She refuses,



Romantic overdose: Michael Douglas...



...Melanie Griffith, Liam Neeson

convinced that Dietrich possesses vital defence secrets. She also hopes to trace her Jewish relatives in Berlin, but the cellar where they were hiding proves to be empty. However, a hidden room in Dietrich's house yields plans of a flying-bomb project. Fleeing when Dietrich becomes suspicious, Linda takes refuge with Margrete, who turns out to be working for the Gestapo. Linda kills her, but is herself wounded. Ed and Sunflower rescue her, and after a shoot-out at the Swiss border Ed manages to carry Linda to safety... Linda concludes her BBC interview by introducing her husband, Ed, and their two sons.

Early on in *Shining Through*, Linda Voss gives her spymaster boss Ed Leland several pointers in espionage technique. Instead of shopping her to the FBI, he meekly inquires where she came by her expertise. Simple, she explains – she watches lots of Hollywood war movies. Before long Linda, with no training other than her extensive moviegoing, has been pitchforked into Nazi Germany and into a plot so rampant with improbabilities, and so blissfully divorced from any sense of historical reality, as to make *Casablanca* look like the last word in stark realism.

One cherishable scene involves Linda, resplendent in white evening dress, making her way on foot and at night from Potsdam to Berlin (some fifteen miles) without attracting attention from anybody – least of all from the Gestapo, who are out combing the city for her. Or, even better, the stratagem adopted by Ed Leland for getting around Germany. Undeterred by his inability to speak a word of German, he dons full SS uniform, wraps a blood-stained bandage round his neck, and carries a small dog-eared card inscribed: "I have a throat wound and cannot speak. Please be patient with me".

Shining Through can at least claim the virtue of consistency, rising to a rip-roaring climax as Leland, riddled with bullets and carrying the wounded Linda in his arms, staggers valiantly across the line marking the Swiss frontier as though scoring a winning touch-down. Well before this juncture, though, it becomes tempting to wonder if what we're watching isn't all in Linda's mind – the deranged fantasy of a poor old lady who has overdosed on romantic war movies. In which case, the framing device of a 'BBC interview' (staged with a parsimony which suggests the Corporation in one of its more acute financial crises) might well turn out to be some form of benign therapy.

Philip Kemp

Tacones Lejanos (High Heels)



Problems of identity: Victoria Abril...

Certificate

18

Distributor

Rank

Production Companies

El Deseo/Ciby 2000

Executive Producer

Augustin Almodóvar

Associate Producer

Enrique Posner

Production Supervisors

Jean Claude Fleury

Pierre Edelman

Yves Attral

Aude Girard

Production Manager

Esther García

Assistant Directors

Yousaf Bokhari

Imma Hoces

Arantxa Aguirre

Screenplay

Pedro Almodóvar

Director of Photography

Alfredo Mayo

Colour

Eastman Color

Camera Operator

Miguel A. Muñoz

Graphics

Studio Gatti

Editor

José Salcedo

Set Design

Pierre-Louis Thevenet

Set Decorator

Carlos García Cambero

Special Effects

Reyes Abades

Music

Ryuichi Sakamoto

Music Performed by

Lolly Grodner

Ryuichi Sakamoto

Brian Pollack

Trish McCabe

Jim Viviano

Angelo Lo Coco

Guitar:

Basilio Georges

Music Co-ordinators

Hal Grant

Roger Trilling

Songs

"Pecadora" performed

by Los Hermanos

Rosario; "Piensa en

mi" by Agustín Lara,

performed by Luz

Casal; "Un Año de

amor" performed by

Basado en los Temas;

"C'est irreparable",

"Un Año d'amore"

by N. Ferrer, G. Verlor,

performed by Luz

Casal; "Solea",

"Saeta" by Gil Evans,

performed by Miles

Davis; "Beyond My

Control"; "A Final

Request" by

George Fenton

Costume Design

José María Cossio

Make-up

Gregorio Ros

Titles/Opticals

Story Film

Pablo Nuñez

Sound Editor

Jean Paul Mugel

Dolby stereo

Production Assistants

Tino Pont

Miguel de Casas

Lola García

Clarissa Couassi

Stunt Co-ordinator

José M. Fernández

Cast

Victoria Abril

Rebecca

Marissa Paredes

Becky del Paramo

Miguel Bosé

Judge Dominguez/

Femme Letal/Hugo

Pedro Díez del Corral

Alberto

Feodor Atkine

Manuel

Ana Lizaran

Margarita

Rocio Muñoz

Little Rebecca

Mairata O'Wisiedo

Judge's Mother

Miriam Díaz Aroca

Isabel

Cristina Marcos

Paula

Bibi Andersson

Chon

Nacho Martínez

Juan, Rebecca's Father

Plácido Guimaraes

Blackman on

Margarita Island

Eva Siva

Nanny

Lupe Barrado

Luisa

Roxy Vaz

Dealer

Angelina Llongueras

Carmen Navarro

Jail Workers

Javier Benavente

Photo Shop Attendant

Gabriel Garbisu

News Director

Montse G. Romeu

Lina Mira

Make-up Girls

M. del Pau

Dominguez

Hilario Pino

News Announcers

Rodolfo Montero

Arresting Officer

Abraham García

Prison Doctor

Carmen Navarro

Prison Nurse

Paula Soldevila

Hospital Nurse

Juan José Otegui

José M. Sacristan

Priests

Fernando Prados

Luigi Martín

Policemen

Victoria Torres

Ana García

Almudena de la Riva

Elia Camino

Raquel Sánchez

M. del Dolores

Ibañez

Yolanda Muñoz

Dancers

Strello El Mantillo

de Lucifer

Model

10,240 feet

114 minutes

Subtitles

Spain 1991

Director: Pedro Almodóvar

Becky del Paramo, once a famous pop singer in the 1960s, returns to Madrid after fifteen years, anxiously awaited by Rebecca, her daughter from her first marriage. Painful memories return to Rebecca of a childhood spent trailing after her mother and assorted lovers – including a second husband, brusquely indifferent to Rebecca, whose 'accidental' death she engineered – before a journalist, Manuel, persuaded Becky to stay in Mexico. Rebecca meets her mother, and after a nostalgic stopover at the basement flat where Becky lived as a child with her caretaker father, takes her home. There Becky is shocked to find that Rebecca is now married to Manuel – who is shocked in his turn because he had been unaware of Rebecca's parentage.

Manuel, who is now director of a television station where Rebecca works as a newsreader, tries to revive his old affair with Becky, and tells her that he wants to divorce her daughter. That evening, the three of them attend a performance by a drag artist called Femme Letal, who specialises in miming to Becky's old songs. Manuel is particularly hostile to him, but Rebecca, who has always been a devoted admirer, claiming that Letal has helped to keep her mother's memory alive, goes backstage and secretly has sex with him.

The following morning, Manuel is found murdered, and the investigating Judge Dominguez discovers that three women visited him that night: Becky, Rebecca and Isabel, who 'signs' the news for deaf viewers with Rebecca on television, and who had begun an affair with Manuel. All three plead their innocence, but later, while announcing the murder on television, Rebecca breaks down and confesses to the crime. Although she is arrested and taken to jail, Dominguez doesn't believe her to be guilty, especially after his own invalid mother's collection of newspaper cuttings reveals that Manuel was once Becky's lover. In jail, Rebecca sees a picture of a fellow inmate's boyfriend, Hugo, a drug dealer who bears a strong resemblance to Femme Letal and who is apparently killed after he turns out to be a police informer. Rebecca also realises that she is pregnant by Femme Letal.

Becky gives a triumphant return performance in Madrid, dedicating her first song to her daughter. Rebecca is released from jail, and returns home to hide the missing murder weapon, Manuel's gun. Still convinced of Rebecca's innocence, Dominguez reveals to her that he ►

◀ is *Femme Letal*, one of a number of personas he has adopted to penetrate the criminal world, and that he is in love with her. After an emotional encounter with Rebecca, who confesses her childhood 'homicide', Becky collapses on stage. In hospital, it emerges that she returned home because of a mortal illness, and mother and daughter are finally reconciled. Becky confesses to Dominguez that she was the murderer, but then tells a priest that she lied. She returns to die in the basement flat where she has taken up residence again, and Rebecca hands her the murder weapon to plant her fingerprints on it, so that their secret will go with her to the grave.

● In treating such an overtly tear-jerking theme as generational conflict, Pedro Almodóvar has described *High Heels* as "a touch melodrama, at times close to terror or *film noir*". Evidently, he has sought to move on from the erotic high spirits of his early features and engage audiences' emotions more directly, as in the lachrymose concluding scenes between mother and daughter. Mostly gone are the farcical fripperies of *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, gone is the acute social satire of *What Have I Done to Deserve This?*, gone (except for one token awkward grapple) are the sexual balletics of *Matador* and *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* What remains is an absurd plot with its mechanics shamelessly exposed and an awkward attempt to recreate the world of *Stella Dallas*, *Mildred Pierce* and *Imitation of Life* (Almodóvar even lifts that immortal line of filial accusation, "Stop acting, mother").

To pay homage is one thing, but to attempt to engage audience sympathies simply by invoking a corresponding pattern is another, probably contradictory, thing. When Fassbinder echoed Sirk in *Fear Eats the Soul*, the transposition of a story of

cross-cultural love confronted by appalling prejudice found its own, precisely defined social context. But the elegant bourgeois world inhabited by the characters in *High Heels* is strangely adrift from anything but a vague Euroland only found in front of a camera.

Almodóvar even dares, in the central confrontation between mother and daughter, to have Rebecca talk about a scene in Bergman's *Autumn Sonata* in which a pianist mother crassly criticises her daughter for her performance of a Chopin prelude. To quote scenes from other films (other than, say, in Godard's endearingly flippant manner) has invariably disquieting effects on an audience's perception of the world they are observing on screen. Here it has the doubly distancing effect of not only making one think of the superiority of Bergman's treatment of the same theme, but also of Almodóvar's characters' inability to achieve their own sense of identity outside a world of devoted reference.

Once again, the director as interior decorator comes up with some bold designs, and even the buildings passed in travelling sequences express a glittering yet potentially oppressive world. The supporting cast of transvestites performs well, and there is a dance number in the prison yard which, if not adding anything to the melodrama at hand, offers a vigorous diversion. But if Almodóvar really believes (as he has stated) that with this film he is becoming more engaged with dialogue and acting, then his talents are beginning to look sorely stretched. Where, in his pre-*Women* films, he offered a fresh and challenging vision – however uneven the result – his growing sense of professionalism has resulted in a worrying lack of edge, emotional or otherwise.

David Thompson



...imitations of life: Miguel Bosé

Till There Was You

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Rank

Production Companies

Five Arrows Films/
Ayer Productions
In association with
Southern Star
Corporation
With assistance from
the Australian Film
Finance Corporation

Producer

Jim McElroy

Line Producer

Tim Sanders

Production Supervisors

Grant Hill

NY:

Bob Jason

LA:

Claude Lawrence Jnr

Production Controller

Kevin Wright

Production Co-ordinators

Jennie Crowley

Vanuatu:

Willie Tapasei

Production Managers

Robyn Clifton

NY:

Nancy Riggs

LA:

Cindy Hochman

Unit Managers

Tic Carroll

Hugh Johnston

2nd Unit:

Jacko Perronnet

Location Managers

Robin Clifton

NY:

Matt Widman

LA:

Richard Muessel

Post-production Supervisor

Sylvia Walker-Wilson

2nd Unit Co-ordinator

Vicki Poplewell

Casting

Australia:

Faith Martin &
Associates

Extras:

Siobhan Hannan

USA:

Mike Fenton

Judy Taylor

Allison Lowitt

NY:

Maureen Fremont

Assistant Directors

Steve Andrews

Toby Pease

Emma Schofield

2nd Unit:

Phil Patterson

Karan Monkhouse

Aerial:

Michael McIntyre

Underwater:

John Suhr

NY:

Byars Cole

Bruce Roberts

LA:

Fred Culbertson

Stephen Price

Screenplay

Michael Thomas

Directors of Photography

Geoffrey Simpson

LA:

Robert Primes

In colour

2nd Unit Photography

David Burr

Aerial Photography

Martin Turner

Underwater Photography

Wolfgang Knochell

Camera Operators

Danny Batterham

2nd Unit:

Martin Turner

LA:

Robert McBride

Brian Armstrong

Optical Effects

Roger Cowland

Editor

Jill Bilcock

Associate Editor

Julia Gelhard

Production Designers

George Liddle

LA:

Susan Emshwiller

Art Directors

Ian Allen

Sydney:

Brian Edmonds

Art Department Co-ordinator

Wendy Huxford

Set Decorators

Narta Statescu

Michael Tolerton

Draughtswoman

Fiona Scott

Scenic Artist

Peter Collias

Special Effects

Supervisor:

Brian Cox

Co-ordinator:

David Hardie

Music

Graeme Revell

Additional:

Peter Kennard

Roger Mason

Music Extract

"Kunstlerleben"

by Johann Strauss,

Performed by

Orchester der

Wiener Volksoper

Saxophone

performed by

Tim Hopkins

Music Supervisor

Tony Meilandt

Songs

"Till There Was You"

by Meredith Willson,

performed by Kate

Ceberano; "Secret

Wood" by Tim

Hopkins, performed

by Mike Noch,

Alex Hewitson,

Tony Hopkins

Costume Design

David Rowe

LA:

Susan Camus

Wardrobe

Supervisor:

Kerry Thompson

Standby:

John Shea

NY:

Merrill Stringer

Make-up

Supervisor:

Violette Fontaine

NY:

Susan Perks

LA:

Marilyn Poucher

Titles

Optical & Graphic

Sound Editors

Tim Jordan

Peter Burgess

Glen Newnham

Wayne Pashley

Peter Townend

Multitrack:

Julius Chan

Sound Recordists

Phil Judd

Gary Wilkins

2nd Unit:

George Craig

NY:

Ron Yoshida

LA:

Walter Martin

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordist

Angus Robertson

Foley

Steve Burgess

Gerry Long

Production Assistants

Ben Williams

Jo Gibson

Kesaia Hanghangkon

Stunt Co-ordinator

Grant Page

Doubles/Stand-ins

Mark Harmon:

Larry Forsyth

Deborah Unger:

Jenni Brown

Tania Greenwood

Margaret Branagan

Jeroen Krabbé:

Alan Fleming

Armourer

Brian Burns

Helicopter Pilot

Mark Robertson

Cast

Mark Harmon

Frank Flynn

Deborah Unger

Anna Vivaldi

Jeroen Krabbé

Robert "Viv" Vivaldi

Shane Briant

Rex

Ivan Kesa

Snowy

Chief

Chief Telkon Watas

Lech Mackiewicz

Muzza

Meriana Obed

Meri

Kistina Nehm

Larky

Ritchie Singer

Robbo

Philip Dodd

Reverend Henze

Jeff Truman

Nobby

Helen O'Connor

Margot

Ira Seidenstein

Milt

Terry Davis

Joanna

Kate Ceberano

Jazz Singer

Barman

Anthony Wong

Willy Roy

Immigration Officer

Julie Thompson

Peg

Manson Matkias

Passport Officer

Peris Kali

Departures Clerk

Fatuana String Band

Golf Club Band

Daniel Sope

Man at Polo

Martin Garner

Mr Jimmy

Gregory Daniel

Trumpet Player

Pamela Kalsal

Stewardess

Joseph Ratu

Joseph Depuey

Curfew Cops

George Lawrence

Bouncer at Fong's

Winston Hazell

Rasta

Silu Maisikoto

Rex's Child

Bialau "Atti" Kaluat

Lorraine Kaluat

Emma Rarua

Mr Hope's Housegirls

Thomas McFarlane

Australia 1990

Director: John Seale

Frank Flynn, who works as barman and occasional saxophonist at the Blue Nile, a Manhattan jazz club faced with closure, gets a letter from his brother Charlie, living in the South Pacific state of Vanuatu: "Drop everything – my ship came in". Arriving in Vanuatu, Frank learns Charlie is dead, apparently the chance victim of drunken violence. Charlie's partner, Bob Vivaldi, confirms the story, but Frank becomes suspicious when he recognises Bob's wife Anna as the disturbed woman who gave him a lift from the airport.

He starts investigating his brother's death, and traces a girlfriend of Charlie's, who takes fright at his questions but leaves him with a gold bar. Bob, though increasingly jealous of Frank's attention to Anna, flies them both to Mount Hope, the island where Bob and Charlie owned a plantation. When Frank wins at poker, Bob's fury at losing is heightened by Frank using the gold bar as part of his stake. That night, Frank flees with Anna. They take Bob's plane, but the motor fails and they crash in the jungle, where they are captured by the Bunlap tribe.

Charlie, it transpires, was a friend of the Bunlaps and had married a Bunlap woman. After an initiation ceremony, Frank is accepted into the tribe. Anna recounts how Charlie found a crashed American bomber carrying impounded Japanese gold, for which Bob had him killed. While Frank swims out to the submerged plane, Bob's henchmen attack the Bunlap village and recapture Anna.

Frank and the Bunlaps mount a counter-assault on Bob's villa. Bob's henchmen are killed and Bob himself, grappling with Frank, is speared by the Bunlap chief. After vainly searching for Anna, who has disappeared, Frank returns to New York, using his reward for the gold to open the New Blue Nile club. Playing there one evening, he is handed a note. He goes outside to find Anna waiting for him.

Apart from its title, which sounds like the kind of fluffy comedy Mitchell Leisen or Gregory La Cava might have directed back in the 30s, there is little that's unexpected about *Till There Was You*. Since the dead brother's partner is played by Jeroen Krabbé as his standard all-purpose Euro-heavy, given to psychotic rages and remarks like "You have to be firm with these Kanaks – let them see who's master", we aren't left to speculate for long

who killed Charlie. Deborah Unger's Anna, meanwhile, divides her time between glowering at her husband and yearning breathily at Frank, so it's not hard to guess what's coming there, either.

Now and then the script, though hardly aspiring to a sub-text, makes perfunctory gestures toward character development. Frank, we're given to understand, starts off as a free-floating, irresponsible sort of guy, but by the end has acquired a new-found sense of responsibility. This is indicated by his entrusting his brother's half-Bunlap children to the care of a friendly Vanuatu cop – though why he should bother, since they seemed to be doing just fine out in the jungle, isn't too clear. And at one point, with Bob's brutal occupation of the island contrasted with the Bunlaps' harmonious life style, we seem to be heading for an *Emerald Forest*-type ecological message. But the film rapidly backs off from anything so serious.

What keeps *Till There Was You* watchable while the plot winds down is the Vanuatu scenery, plus some incidental felicities of local custom. Not surprisingly, this being the first film as director by the cinematographer John Seale (*Rainman*, *Gorillas in the Mist* and *The Mosquito Coast*, among others), the island locations look stunning, no doubt warming the hearts of the Vanuatu Tourist Board. And the Bunlap tribe, who display all the irrepressible nonchalance of natural-born actors, provide most of the film's best moments. To prove himself, Frank has to dive head-first from a huge banyan tree, lianas attached at his ankles to pull him up inches from the ground. After he's done it, the tribespeople merrily line up to jiggle his balls – the local equivalent, it would seem, of a warm handshake.

Philip Kemp



Shaken: Mark Harmon

Urga

Certificate
PG

Distributor
Mayfair Palace

Production Companies
Camera One/
Hachette Première
et Compagnie/UGC
Images(Paris)/Studio
Trite (Moscow)

Executive Producer
Jean-Louis Piel

Supervising Producer
Michel Seydoux

Associate Producer
René Cleitman

Production Supervisor
USSR:

Matty Groenlud

Production Managers
Leonid

Vereschchaguine

Patrick Millet

She Senlin

Assistant Director
Anatoly Ermilov

Screenplay
Roustam

Ibragimbekov

Story
Nikita Mikhalkov

Roustam

Ibragimbekov

Director of Photography
Villenn Kaluta

In colour

Steadicam Operator
Jean-Jack Brehier

Editor
Joëlle Hache

Production Designer
Aleksandr Levchenko

Music
Eduard Artemiev

Costume Design
Irina Guinno

Wardrobe Supervisor
Galina Bolotnikova

Make-up Supervisor
Larissa Avdutchko

Sound Editor
Jean Goudier

Sound Recordist
Jean Umansky

Sound Re-recordists
Dominique

Hennequin

Vincent Arnardi

Cast
Badema

Pagma

Bayaertu
Gombo

Vladimir Gostukhin
Sergei

Babushka
Grandma

Larissa Kuznetsova
Marina

Jon Bochinski
Stanislas

Bao Yongyan
Bourma

Wurinile
Bouin

Wang Zhiyong
Van Biao

Baoyinhexige
Bayartou

Nikolai Vachtchiline
Nikolai

10,661 feet
118 minutes

Subtitles

France/USSR 1990

Director: Nikita Mikhalkov

Sergei, a Russian worker engaged on a road-building project in Inner Mongolia, falls asleep at the wheel of his truck and crashes in a spot apparently far from human habitation. He is rescued by Gombo, a Mongolian who herds sheep and horses and lives a traditional life with his wife Pagma, their children Bouin and Bourma, and a baby looked after by the grandmother. Pressed to join them for an evening meal prepared from a sheep slaughtered before his eyes, Sergei fights back the revulsion he feels at the lack of hygiene, while pressing them to join him in Russian-style toasts of their home-made brew. Gombo and his family regard Sergei's customs with equal disgust masked with politeness.

The next day, with his truck back on the road, Sergei drives Gombo and his horses to town. There Gombo has promised Pagma he will purchase condoms and a television set. Too embarrassed to buy the contraceptives, Gombo instead visits a fairground. Gombo meets Sergei and a Russian friend in a disco where Sergei swiftly becomes drunk and exhorts the Chinese band to play a romantic ballad he has tattooed on his back from his army days.

He is carried off to the police station, where Gombo organises his release with the help of Pagma's brother, a pianist in a smart hotel. On his journey home, Gombo unwraps the television he has been carrying on horseback. In the screen he sees a reflection of the steppes; from the distance, a group of Mongol warriors approach on horseback, pennants flying. They ridicule Gombo's trappings of civilisation, and castigate him for not recognising their leader, Genghis Khan. When Sergei arrives, they are both attacked, wrapped in blankets and dragged after the horses. The truck and television set burst into flames.

Back home, when Pagma asks about the contraceptives, Gombo makes up an excuse. Together they leave their tent, taking with them the 'urga', a pole with a noose for catching cattle which is also used to mark out a private space for love-making. The narrator identifies himself as the child of that union; named after Genghis Khan, he is employed by the gasworks that now stands where Gombo's tent once stood.

Urga, filmed on the steppes of Inner Mongolia and cast largely with Mongolians, has generally been seen as a celebration of a vanishing world. The integrity of the film's representation of Mongolian life seems impressive and is pleasingly ►



A time for heroes?

unsolemn: "Ride [a horse]! In a tuxedo!" exclaims Gombo's brother-in-law, dragged away from the grand piano he plays in the lounge of an elegant hotel. There is a delicacy of observation in Mikhalkov's treatment of Gombo and his family (the tactfully exploratory pans over the familiar and unfamiliar bric-à-brac of daily life, the straight-to-camera accordion recital given by Bourma), complemented by immaculate shots of the vast prairie.

Arguably, however, Mikhalkov's film is as much, if not more, an investigation of post-Soviet Russian malaise as of Mongolian life styles. Sergei, as played with gritty realism by Vladimir Gostukhin, is the Ugly Russian of so much 80s 'black realist' film-making. The heroic Soviet rationale for his life is stripped away to reveal an indigence both economic – he protests at working in the sticks for extra pay and still being unable to afford a refrigerator – and cultural. Gombo's family muster a polite tolerance for Sergei's efforts to reciprocate their hospitality by way of repeated toasts in raw spirits, a last, awkward vestige of gracious exchange.

Between the casual disposal of the corpse of Gombo's uncle, left out for birds of prey, and the slaughter of the sheep (rendered remarkably bloodlessly into butcher's portions before our eyes), Gombo clearly represents the dream of a lost, stronger and simpler cultural identity. The film indeed takes its name from a particular cultural marker. The urga is a pole with a noose at one end which is used both to catch stray beasts and, when erected on the steppe, to mark a private space for the sexual act – a symbol, Mikhalkov has said, of love, solitude and power. Gombo yields to Pagma's 'townie' ways and purchases the television set she feels is essential, but not the contraceptives she requests. Instead, he recalls her to the purity of her culture and thereby produces the child who will bear Genghis Khan's name,

embodying a dream of heroism even while employed by the gasworks.

Beyond the locked door which conceals Sergei and his wife's love-making, their daughter reads aloud from a revolutionary poem: a cultural marker of another kind. History and memory are key but largely closed off in Sergei's case. What we learn about his and his family's past is deliberately fragmented and largely supplanted by his agonised singing of "The Hills of Manchuria", with its lament for the dead "heroes of the Russian soil". The burden of lost heroism is largely displaced on to Gombo and the sequence in which Genghis Khan and his followers appear, a sequence given a rare emotional pull by the deliberate ambiguity of its narrative status: dream, fantasy, ritual? Set down on the prairie, the television reflects first Gombo and his landscape, then Genghis Khan and his horde, and finally a sequence from *Rambo III* before it explodes in flames (once in Gombo's tent, the set oscillates more predictably between Gorbachev/Bush exchanges and a Chinese programme).

Thanks to a circumspect performance and Mikhalkov's tactful direction, Gombo is never merely an instance of the noble savage. He is extricated from the 'merely ethnic' by his modernity – in fact, there's an anomie in the way he spends an afternoon buying rides in the fairground that aligns him, along with Sergei, with Wenders' protagonists in *Kings of the Road*. The film, though, is hardly ambiguous in its attitude towards heroism: a continually vital heroic tradition is seen as a firm touchstone of cultural viability. Mikhalkov's vision is a nostalgic one in several respects, not least in its sexual politics. For all its strengths, finally, *Urga* has little to contribute to debate in the post-Soviet Russian cinema about what went wrong and what is to be done at this fraught moment for nascent Russian democracy.

Verina Glaessner

Adam Bede

Distributor

BBC TV

Production Company

BBC Films

In association with

WGBH Boston

For Screen One

Executive Producer

Richard Broke

Producer

Peter Goodchild

Associate Producer

Alison Gilby

Production Manager

Alan Charlesworth

Production Operatives

Supervisor

John Richardson

Casting Adviser

Sue Whatmough

Assistant Directors

Mervyn Gill-Dougherty

Todd Austin

John Spencer

Screenplay

Maggie Wadey

Based on the novel

by George Eliot

Director of Photography

Rex Maidment

In colour

Visual Effects

Emergency House

Graphic Designer

Roger Ferrin

Editor

Dick Allen

Production Designer

Paul Joel

Music

Richard Hartley

Costume Design

Sheena Napier

Make-up Design

Dawn Alcock

Sound Editors

David Sleight

Catherine Hodgson

Sound Recordists

Barrie Tharby

Simon Dart

Sound Re-recordist

Peter Smith

Cast

Iain Glen

Adam Bede

Patsy Kensit

Hetty Sorrel

Susannah Harker

Dinah Morris

James Wilby

Arthur Donnithorne

Julia McKenzie

Mrs Poyser

Robert Stephens

Reverend Irwine

Jean Marsh

Lisbeth Bede

Freddie Jones

Squire

Michael Percival

Court Official

Edward Jewesbury

Judge

Brian Osborne

Jury Spokesman

Paul Brooke

Martin Poyser

Tacita Haffenden

Totty Poyser

Chase Marks

Tommy Poyser

William Holmes

Marty Poyser

Alan Cox

Seth Bede

Michael Robbins

Thias Bede

Jonathan Coy

Pym

Angus Barnett

Labourer

Johnny Van Derrick

Alick

Roy Evans

Coachman

Jack Milner

Traveller

Jennie Heslewood

Landlady

Bill Moody

Landlord

Patsy Byrne

Sarah Stone

James Greene

Prosecution Council

George Innes

John Olding

John Burgess

Sheriff

9,010 feet

(25 fps) 102 minutes

United Kingdom 1991

Director: Giles Foster



Rural England, 1799. Hetty Sorrel, who lives on her aunt and uncle's farm, finds herself the object of two men's attentions. Adam Bede, who works on the local squire's land, hopes to marry her once he has established himself, while the dashing Arthur Donnithorne, army captain and grandson of the squire, is aroused by her beauty. Unaware of Adam's interest in Hetty, Arthur befriends the young workman and makes him steward of his grandfather's woods. Meanwhile, Adam's brother, Seth, tries in vain to court Dinah Morris, a Methodist preacher from another village, who refuses to give up her vocation for marriage.

Flattered by Arthur's attentions, Hetty is seduced by him. One evening, Adam sees them kissing in the woods. After Hetty has departed, he challenges Arthur and they fight. Adam finally accepts Arthur's word that he has done no more than kiss Hetty, but he insists that the captain explain to her he has no intention of marrying her. Before returning to his regiment, Arthur writes to Hetty ending their affair.

Devastated, Hetty agrees to marry Adam. When she realises she is pregnant by Arthur, she becomes distraught and, under the pretence of visiting Dinah, she tries to find him, only to hear that his regiment has been posted to Ireland. When she fails to return home, Adam looks for her and eventually discovers that she is on trial for the murder of her own child. The disbelieving Adam attends the trial, where it is revealed that after giving birth, Hetty left her baby to die in the woods. Condemned to death, Hetty confesses her sins to Dinah in her prison cell and begs Adam's forgiveness. As Hetty is being taken to the gallows, Arthur arrives with a royal reprieve which commutes her sentence to deportation. Back in his workshop, Adam is visited by Dinah who has come to say goodbye. After she has left, Adam's mother tells him Dinah is in love with him. Incredulous at first, he then runs after Dinah and they embrace.

Adam Bede, George Eliot's first novel, was published in 1859 to universal critical acclaim. Unfortunately, no such praise is likely to follow for this film adaptation, produced for BBC TV's Screen One series. Indeed, Eliot's novel is really neither here nor there, since Maggie Wadey's screenplay and Giles Foster's direction have stripped away its characters and thematic concerns. What remains are the

bare bones of the storyline, dialogue which seems principally concerned with fidelity to regional dialects and class accents, a handful of picturesque locations, and some clumsy visual symbolism.

The main characters in particular are grossly underdeveloped, and as a result the actors are unable convincingly to convey the tragic dimensions of the drama. As the film limps towards its climax, Patsy Kensit as the poor, misguided Hetty fails to engage our sympathy, while James Wilby's Arthur arouses no emotion at all and Iain Glen's wooden portrayal of Adam simply makes him seem excruciatingly dull. The film also disappoints as a celebration of a long-vanished rural life, which is what Eliot intended her novel to be. The unimaginatively shot scenes of sunlight streaming through woodlands, of country gardens, wheatfields and (affluent) farm life come across as visual clichés rather than an evocation of a bygone pastoral idyll. Equally clichéd are Hetty's red dress as she runs through the fields to meet Arthur, and the close-ups of her lips stained by redcurrant juice as she flirts with Adam.

One the whole, this bland film owes more to a Timotei shampoo commercial than to cinema. The only time Foster displays any creative flair is in the fight between Adam and Arthur in the woods, where the mobile camerawork imparts a genuine sense of rough and tumble. A little more of such ingenuity would have given *Adam Bede* a much-needed lift.

Julia Knight



Misguided: Patsy Kensit, James Wilby

The Last Romantics

Distributor
BBC TV

Production Company
BBC Films

For Screen 2

Executive Producers

Barry Hanson

Joe Lustig

Producer

David M. Thompson

Production

Associate

Robin Gardiner

Location Manager

Gilly Hayward

Casting Adviser

Joyce Nettles

Assistant Directors

Martin Hutchings

Psyche Ranson

Bill Baggs

Peter Eryl Lloyd

Screenplay

Nigel Williams

Director of

Photography

David Feig

In colour

Visual Effects

Steve Lucas

Graphic Designer

Pippa Jones

Editor

Paul Tothill

Production Designer

Rob Hinds

Music/Music

Director

Carl Davis

Costume Design

Jeremy Turner

Make-up Designer

Karen Thomas

Sound Editor

Debbie Pragnell

Sound Recordists

Roger Slater

Keith Marriner

Production

Assistant

Caroline Houghton

Stunts

Gareth Milne

Dave Cronnelly

Nicholas Powell

Bill Weston

Cast

Ian Holm

Frank Raymond Leavis

Sara Kestelman

Queenie Leavis

Leo McKern

Sir Arthur Quiller-

Couch

Alan Cumming

Tulloch

Rufus Sewell

Costain

John Lloyd

Fillingham

Young Leavis

Helga Brindle

Young Queenie

Miranda Forbes

Miss Greve

Charles Dale

Ambulance Driver

Alice Douglas

Girton Girl

Sean O'Callaghan

Police Constable

8,500 feet

(25 fps) 90 minutes

United Kingdom 1991

Director: Jack Gold



Cambridge University, 1969.

F.R. Leavis, nearing the end of his controversial career teaching English literature, is disturbed during a tutorial by protesting students. The chief rebel, Costain, shares rooms with Tulloch, Leavis' latest pupil. Leavis' thoughts return to his own student days, when he worshipped Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (known as "Q"), the University's first Professor of English Literature, though they shared differing views on modern authors (especially T.S. Eliot). Queenie, Leavis' combative wife, whom he met when he was a graduate student, berates him for his sentimental attachment to Q and for encouraging his students' adoration.

Leavis invites Tulloch and Costain to Sunday tea. Costain sneers at Leavis and all English studies; Tulloch struggles to follow his teacher's view of literature as a revivifying force and a bulwark against the corruption of modern life. More aggravated than ever, Queenie tries to provoke her husband by demolishing one of Q's poems; unperturbed, Leavis presents the confused Tulloch with a precious volume of Wordsworth, given to him by Q. In another flashback, Leavis' dismissive comments on Q's *Oxford Book of English Verse* trigger a bitter quarrel between the two men.

Relations between Leavis, Tulloch and Costain reach a climax after a stormy tutorial. Costain urges Tulloch to show his rejection of Leavis' values by climbing a church tower and tossing the Wordsworth volume into his idol's nearby garden. Back in the past, Q heals their rift by giving Leavis a first edition of Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads*, owned by Q's grandfather. The police, and fire brigade are summoned to escort Tulloch down. "Will you never stop letting them betray you?" Queenie asks, as Leavis makes light of the damaged book. Costain is expelled; Tulloch sees no further point to literary study. Leavis finds solace sitting with Queenie in the college grounds, reading their beloved books.

● F.R. Leavis (1895-1978), the high-minded scourge of university English studies, author of *The Common Pursuit*, *New Bearings in English Poetry* and other stern volumes, must be among the unlikeliest film heroes ever. Yet here the man stands, in a fashion, with his trademark plimsolls and open-necked shirt, the grey stubble and the fervent belief in his profession's importance: "To live properly", he declares during one of the flashbacks, "is to live in and for great literature". Here too is Queenie,



Betrayed: Ian Holm, Leo McKern

his formidable wife, author of *Fiction and the Reading Public*, and the gentleman-scholar Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (Leo McKern, most appropriately cast), rhapsodic lines rolling from his lips as he lectures awestruck students or lounges in a punt, wine glass in hand.

A life governed by Milton, T.S. Eliot, university tutorials and high moral precepts provides tough meat for popular drama. To make his task easier, screenwriter Nigel Williams cheats on one basic fact: by 1969 Leavis had already left Cambridge, and was visiting professor at York, though his ghost certainly lingered. Thanks to the author's *legerdemain*, a conflict is born: the high priest of Eng Lit sees his most precious beliefs endangered by the post-1968 wave of student protest. But any advantage thus won must be balanced against the film's failure to spell out the historical background and Leavis' high reputation – or even his full name – to the general audience.

Tutorials and Sunday teas become battlegrounds between Leavis, Queenie, and the sneering, black-jacketed Costain, with another fictional student, Tulloch, caught in the middle. To clinch his manufactured debate, Williams forces Tulloch to prove his conversion to the anti-literature brigade by clambering perilously up a church tower. This may pump physical action into a film otherwise dominated by verbal musings and argument, but produces a disfiguring, specious climax.

Jack Gold's tight, functional direction keeps *The Last Romantics* squarely within the small screen's frame. The camera sticks close to the characters' faces, while Cambridge itself scarcely advances beyond the cliché of a Disneyland for academics, where the sun always shines, the punts glide, and the grass is always green. All told, this is a baffling enterprise. The drama remains stillborn; our minds are teased. But never engaged.

Geff Brown

Reviews

Adam Bede
The Last Romantics

Reviews

Mark Kermode reviews rental/premiere videos released this month and William Green reviews retail/premiere videos

★ Highlights

Reviews in *Monthly Film Bulletin* (MFB) and *Sight and Sound* are cited in parentheses

Rental

Backdraft

CIC Video VHA 1514
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Ron Howard
Despite the all-star cast (Kurt Russell, Robert De Niro, Scott Glenn, William Baldwin) the real star of this explosive action pic is a huge ball of fire which licks at the walls of buildings. Fantastic special effects and solid performances are unfortunately spoilt by a weak script. (S&S August 1991)

City Slickers

First Independent VA 20147
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Ron Underwood
★ An unashamedly contrived comedy starring king of the sassy one-liner Billy Crystal. Three city friends go on a wild West cattle drive holiday in this laugh-a-minute, boys-own romp with a smidgen of serious sentiment. (S&S November 1991)

Drop Dead Fred

20.20 Vision 13773
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Ate de Jong
Toilet humour expert Rik Mayall screams "bum and fart" as usual in de Jong's surprisingly amusing comedy. A desolate woman is visited by an imaginary childhood friend who wreaks havoc with her life, duffs up her philandering hubby, and terrifies her mother. (S&S November 1991)

Dying Young

FoxVideo 1914
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Joel Schumacher
Mawkish melodrama with a poor Julia Roberts falling for a rich young man with cancer. Schumacher ladles the schmaltz on with a trowel. Cynical

and nasty. (S&S September 1991)

Edward II

Palace Premiere PVC 2281R
UK 1991

Certificate 18 Director Derek Jarman
★ Jarman's finest in many a year – this twisted adaptation of Marlowe's play teases an ideology out of a story rather than imposing one on it. The homophobia of yore becomes a mirror for the political climate of today. Affecting and engaging, despite some heavy-handed symbolism. (S&S November 1991)

F/X2 – The Deadly Art of Illusion

Columbia Tristar 12826
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Richard Franklin
Surprisingly un-special special effects plague this limp sequel to the 1989 murder-mystery hit. Bryan Brown and Brian Dennehy go through the motions while a robot clown mimics their actions. Dull. (S&S November 1991)

K2

EV EVV 1214
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Franc Roddam
Two men leave their families in order to become the umpteenth people to climb the second highest mountain in the world. The question is why bother? (S&S February 1992)

Life Stinks

FoxVideo 2800
USA 1991

Certificate PG Director Mel Brooks
A partial return to form for Brooks after the dismal inanities of *Spaceballs*. Callous billionaire Goddard Bolt discovers the meaning of life in a city of homelessness and deprivation. (S&S October 1991)

Meeting Venus

Warner PEV 12309
UK 1990

Certificate 15 Director Istvan Szabo
A Hungarian conductor (Niels Arestrup) battles through rehearsals for a performance of *Tannhäuser*. Glenn Close

is the fiery diva he becomes embroiled with. (S&S October 1991)

Naked Tango

Warner 90152
USA 1990

Certificate 18 Director Leonard Schrader
Clumsy 'erotic' folly, set against the steamy backdrop of 20s Buenos Aires. *Dirty Dancing* with a degree. (S&S September 1991)

Navy Seals

MCEG Virgin VOR 140
USA 1990

Certificate 15 Director Lewis Teague
Dreary action-pic about a covert special-operations task force rescuing US hostages from Beirut. "We don't even exist" complains one – we wish! (S&S July 1991)

Proof

Artificial Eye ART 902
Australia 1991

Certificate 15 Director Jocelyn Moorhouse
★ Wonderful offbeat comedy that blends dark satire with colourful romanticism. Hugo Weaving gives an excellent central performance as a blind photographer who tests the limits of trust. Moorhouse is a director to watch out for. (S&S December 1991)

Prospero's Books

Palace Premiere PVC 2199R
Netherlands/France/Italy 1991

Certificate 15 Director Peter Greenaway
★ Visually stunning, aurally seductive, narratively self-indulgent adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. John Gielgud narrates all the parts except the final third. (S&S September 1991)

The Rocketeer

Touchstone D341052
USA 1991

Certificate PG Director Joe Johnston
★ This adaptation of Dave Stevens' cartoon strip is a triumph of design over content. A 30s racing pilot discovers a prototype rocket-pack and finds himself in a war against the Nazis. Top performances by Alan Arkin and Timothy Dalton. A must for comic fans. (S&S August 1991)

Stepping Out

CIC Video VHB 2590
USA 1991

Certificate PG Director Lewis Gilbert
Toe-tapping, heart-warming fun as a group of amateur tap dancers rehearse for a charity performance. Liza Minelli is fab, Julie Walters is a hoot in an array of outlandish leotards, but Richard Harris' histrionic script is mildly embarrassing. (S&S September 1991)

Teen Agent

Warner PEV 12071
USA 1991

Certificate PG Director William Dear



Urban cowboys: Bruno Kirby, 'Norman', Billy Crystal, Daniel Stern in 'City Slickers'

Eye-catching gadgetry abounds in the promising opening moments of this teenage Bond movie parody, but sadly sub-standard action footage prevails. Richard Grieco is appallingly bland in the lead. (S&S October 1991)

Young Soul Rebels

Braveworld BRV 10137

UK 1991

Certificate 18 Director Isaac Julien
Ambitious but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to marry disparate genres (thriller, teen movie, musical, melodrama) from local talent Julien. Punks, soul-boys, gays and straights clash on the streets of Britain in 1977. Starring newcomers Mo'Nique and Valentine Nonyela.
(S&S September 1991)

Rental premiere

Dead Silence

FoxVideo 1947

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Peter O'Fallon
Producers Bob Bibb, Lewis Goldstein
Screenplay J. David Miles, story by Bob Bibb, Lewis Goldstein
Lead Actors Renee Estevez, Lisanne Falk, Carrie Mitchum
88 minutes

Three teenagers on holiday run down a tramp and fail to report it. Subsequently each is haunted by their secret crime. Simple, moody TV drama, boosted by an evocative score and attractive performances.

False Arrest

Braveworld BRV 10135

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Bill L. Norton
Producer Ron Gilbert
Screenplay Andrew Laskos, based on the book by Joyce Lukezic, Ted Schwarz
Lead Actors Donna Mills, Steven Bauer, Lane Smith, Lewis van Bergen, Dennis Christopher
120 minutes

More true-life TV traumas. A woman wrongly convicted of murdering her husband's business associate fights for (and wins) her freedom. Standard fare.

Fantasy

RCA Columbia CVT 13301

Australia 1990

Certificate 18 Directors Geoffrey Brown, Derek Strahan
Producer Geoffrey Brown
Screenplay Derek Strahan
Lead Actors Colin Borghonon, Clare Chilton, Jane Darley-Jones, Julia Binns
77 minutes
Lively, unabashed psycho-sex fantasy made for the international soft-core market, trimmed down for UK release. A recently liberated woman trades fantasies with a ruthless doctor. Deadpan performances, good sci-fi script (full of hilarious Freudian jargon) and an end-reel of bloopers thrown in for good measure.

Fire in the Dark

RCA Columbia CVT 14191

USA 1991

Certificate PG Director David Jones
Producers Don Gregory, Bernie Kahn
Screenplay David J. Hill
Lead Actors Olympia Dukakis, Lindsay Wagner, Jean Stapleton, Ray Wise, Edward Herrmann
94 minutes
Routine 'touching, bittersweet' comedy. Dukakis comes to terms with old age and sorts out a family feud in the process.

Kiss Shot

RCA Columbia CVT 14188

USA 1991

Certificate PG Director Jerry London
Producer Salli Newman, Mel A. Bishop
Screenplay Carl Kleinschmitt
Lead Actors Whoopi Goldberg, Dennis Franz, Dorian Harewood, Tasha Scott
93 minutes
Comedy starring Whoopi Goldberg, who attempts to save her home from repossession by becoming 'queen of the eight ball'. Inevitably she falls in love with an opponent.

Living a Lie

Odyssey ODY 314

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Larry Shaw
Producer R.W. Goodwin
Screenplay Dalene Young
Lead Actors Jill Eikenberry, Peter Coyote
89 minutes
A wife struggles with her conscience when she begins to suspect her husband of murder. Standard true-life drama.

Red Surf

Medusa MC 321

USA 1989

Certificate 18 Director H. Gordon Boos
Producer Richard Weinman
Screenplay Vincent Roberts
Lead Actors George Clooney, Doug Savant, Dedee Pfeiffer, Gene Simmons
98 minutes
Strangely moody and endearing teen-action, rites-of-passage yarn. Rival gangs on LA's streets clash after a drug deal goes wrong. Solid performances (except Gene Simmons in a cameo) and script.

Runaway Dreams

Capital CHV 1022

USA 1989

Certificate 18 Director Michele Noble
Producer Frank Little
Screenplay John Hopkins
Lead Actors Jennifer Gorey, Brian Tarantino, Cordis Heard, Kaitlin Hopkins
90 minutes
A sexually abused runaway teenager is gang-raped and forced to become a prostitute. Much unpleasantness ensues. More tiresome and depressing than sleazy, despite the (misleading) fetishistic cover still.

Shipwrecked

Disney D111682

Sweden 1991

Certificate PG Director Nils Gaup
Producer

John M. Jacobsen
Screenplay Nils Gaup, Bob Foss, Greg Dinner, Nick Thiel, based on the book *Haakon Haakonsen* by Ov Falck-Ytter
Lead Actors Stian Smestad, Trond Peter Stamso Mund, Louisa Haigh, Gabrielle Byrne
89 minutes
Lavishly mounted children's adventure pic about a young boy's fight for survival on a desert island.

Survive the Savage Sea

Warner 12452

USA 1991

Certificate U Director Kevin James Dobson
Producers Julie Anne Weitz, Gregory Prange
Screenplay Fred Haines, Scott Swanton, based on the book by Douglas Robertson
Lead Actors Ali MacGraw, Robert Urich, Danielle Von Zemeck, Mark Ballou, David Franklin
87 minutes
A family is cast adrift in a make-shift life-raft. Efficiently handled, occasionally gruelling but entirely unsurprising.

Sweet 15

Warner 00951

USA 1991

Certificate U Director Victoria Hochberg
Producer Richard Soto
Screenplay Sharon Weil
Lead Actors Tony Plana, Jenny Gago, Panchito Gomez, Karla Montana
105 minutes
Sprightly and unusual Mexican-American TV movie about a young girl approaching her coming-of-age ceremony and the family strife that results. A welcome breath of low-budget fresh air amidst the usual teen-angst fillers.

Terminal Bliss

Warner 32044

USA 1990

Certificate 18 Director Jordan Alan
Producer Brian Cox
Screenplay Jordan Alan
Lead Actors Tim Owen, Alex Arquette, Luke Perry, Estee Chandler, Sonia Curtiss, Michael Grant
87 minutes
★ Dark, disjointed and melancholic tale of drug-addled rich teenagers meandering towards oblivion. Alan's brooding script and low-key direction mix perfectly with Frank W. Becker's unsettling score.

Timebomb

EV EVV 1201

USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Avi Nesher
Producer Raffaella de Laurentiis
Screenplay Avi Nesher
Lead Actors Michael Biehn, Patsy Kensit, Tracy Scoggins, Robert Culp
92 minutes
Sci-fi psycho-fantasy similar to *Jacob's Ladder*. Watch-mender Biehn is haunted by flashes of a mysterious murderous past. Inventive gadgetry and visuals blend with a ridiculous but lively plot.

Timescape

Medusa MC 324

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director David N. Twohy
Producer John A. O'Connor
Screenplay



Catholic tastes: Stéphane Audran

David N. Twohy, based on the novella *Vintage Season*
Lead Actors Jeff Daniels, Adriana Richards, Emilia Crow, George Murdock
90 minutes
★ Terrific time-travel movie with a heart of gold. Bored inhabitants of the 21st century take tourist trips through time to spectate at major disasters, meeting en route a devastated widower. Fascinating and intelligent.

To Catch a Killer

Odyssey ODY 311

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Eric Till
Producer Richard O. Lowry
Screenplay Jud Kinberg
Lead Actors Brian Dennehy, Michael Riley, Margot Kidder, Meg Foster
188 minutes
★ TV mini-series adaptation about the capture of serial killer John Wayne Gacey. Great performance by Dennehy as the respectable psycho in this superior true-story drama.

Retail

The Adventures of Robin Hood

Warner PES 99234

USA 1938 Price £10.99

Certificate U Directors Michael Curtiz/William Keighley
Early Technicolor experiment which, with Errol Flynn as Robin and Olivia de Havilland as Maid Marian, can't go wrong. (MFB No. 54)

Always

CIC Video VHR 1412

USA 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Steven Spielberg
Deceased ace pilot Richard Dreyfuss, accompanied by guardian angel Audrey Hepburn, helps ex-girlfriend Holly Hunter find a new man in the land of the living. (MFB No. 675)

Babette's Feast (Babettes Gaestebud)

Braveworld STV 2082

Denmark 1987 Price £10.99

Certificate U Director Gabriel Axel
★ Epicure heaven as a French cook

(Stéphane Audran) spends a small fortune preparing a meal for the puritan inhabitants of a little Danish village. From a short story by Isak Dinesen. *Subtitles* (MFB No. 650)

Days of Thunder

CIC Video VHR 2474

USA 1990 Price £12.99

Certificate 15 Director Tony Scott
Standard racing car pic that follows star driver Tom Cruise from the pits to the chequered flag, sweeping up sultry Nicole Kidman on the way. (MFB No. 680)

Deliverance

Warner PES 1004

USA 1972 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director John Boorman
★ A weekend canoe trip in the wilds goes horribly wrong for four middle-aged buddies. Boorman's atmospheric, brutal film does a brilliant job of undermining the machismo of a fine tough guy cast – Jon Voight, Burt Reynolds, Ned Beatty. (MFB No. 464)

The Exorcist III

FoxVideo 1901

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 18
Director William Peter Blatty
Grim-faced George C. Scott takes over the crucifix from a much-missed Richard Burton. His devilish antagonists, killer Brad Dourif and lunatic Jason Miller, are not a patch on Linda Blair. (MFB No. 683)

The Fourth War

Guild GLD 50922

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 15
Director John Frankenheimer
Desperate and unsuccessful attempt to return to the comfortable dramatic stand-offs of the Cold War. Roy Scheider and Jürgen Prochnow glare at each other's armies over the Czech-German border. (MFB No. 678)

Full Moon in Paris (Les Nuits de la pleine lune)

Artificial Eye ART 021

France 1984 Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director Eric Rohmer
★ One of Rohmer's sharpest dissections of callow Parisian youth. Pascale Ogier (who died not long after the film's release) plays a young woman with two flats and too many admirers. *Subtitles* (MFB No. 611)

Ghost

CIC Video VHR 2496

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Jerry Zucker
Demi Moore separated from Patrick Swayze by murder most foul is reunited by medium Whoopi Goldberg. This gigantic box-office hit includes two interviews with the stars. (MFB No. 681)

GoodFellas

Warner PES 12039

USA 1990 Price £12.99

Certificate 18 Director Martin Scorsese
★ Hard-hitting portrait of the mob, following a middle-ranking wiseguy (Ray Liotta) from petty-thieving adolescence to brutal, drug-addicted middle-age. The dazzling cast includes Joe Pesci, Robert De Niro, Paul Sorvino. (MFB No. 683)

The Icicle Thief (Ladri di saponette)

Palace Classics PVC 2280S

Italy 1989 Price £15.99

Certificate PG Director Maurizio Nichetti
★ Poking cruel fun at society's promiscuous consumption of images, Nichetti plays with the idea of a film-within-a film. An excellent farce, it would be only proper to watch it on video. *Subtitles* (MFB No. 682)

Joe Versus the Volcano

Warner PES 11912

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate PG
Director John Patrick Shanley
Charmless fantasy about a hypochondriac (Tom Hanks) who throws in his office job for the islands of the South Pacific – populated by people in grass skirts and several versions of Meg Ryan. (MFB No. 678)

Moon 44

Medusa MED 12672

West Germany 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Roland Emmerich
Sub-standard space adventure. The usual themes are rehashed – peril in the space shuttle, menace from the mining corporation and betrayal by robots. Lisa Eichhorn and Malcolm McDowell take part. (MFB No. 680)

Nikita

Palace Classics PVC 2188S

France/Italy 1990 Price £15.99

Certificate 18 Director Luc Besson
His government contract killer may be a hardbitten ex-junkie (Anne Parillaud),

but high-gloss brutality and street chic do not disguise Besson's reactionary intent – to refashion the Bond image for the 90s. *Subtitles* Letterbox edition (MFB No. 682)

Pelle the Conqueror (Pelle Erobreren)

Braveworld STV 2083

Denmark/Sweden 1987 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Bille August
A father (Max von Sydow) and son (Pelle Hvenegaard) leave Sweden to become farm labourers on a rural estate in Denmark at the turn of the century. Taken from the novel by Martin Andersen Nexø – not as tragic as Hardy, but more eventful. *Subtitles* (MFB No. 667)

Presumed Innocent

Warner PES 12034

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Alan J. Pakula
★ Courtroom drama based on Scott Turow's bestseller, in which the lawyer is the murder victim, the prosecuting attorney is the prime suspect, and the judge is one step ahead of a bribery rap. Harrison Ford flounders impressively in the dock. (MFB No. 682)

Police

Artificial Eye ART 025

France 1985 Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director Maurice Pialat
★ Characteristically rough-hewn account of a Paris drug squad policeman (Gérard Depardieu), led astray by an unreliable woman (Sophie Marceau). Pialat's portrayal of street life milieu has the punch of a documentary. *Subtitles* (MFB No. 626)

The Rachel Papers

MCEG Virgin VVD 1001

UK 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Damian Harris
Based on a novel by Martin Amis, the character of love-struck teenager Charles Highway is tested to destruction by a film which can't decide whether he belongs in the swinging 60s or the up-to-date 90s. (MFB No. 670)



Bergmanesque influences: Tommy Kjellqvist in 'The Sacrifice'

The Red Balloon (Le Ballon rouge) Stowaway in the Sky (Le Voyage en ballon)

Braveworld STV 2098/STV 2097

France 1956/1960 Price £7.99 each

Certificate U Director Albert Lamorisse
★ Lamorisse won several awards for his short films, of which *Le Ballon rouge* remains the most famous – the story of a little boy befriended by a balloon, cleverly shot and edited with minimal dialogue. *Le Voyage en ballon*, a feature-length sequel, was less successful despite a voice-over by Jack Lemmon. (MFB Nos. 275/361)

Rollerball

MGM/UA PES 50262

USA 1975 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Norman Jewison
James Caan plays heroics to the hilt as a futuristic star gladiator of the corporate state-organised 'rollerball' games, and faces new kinds of violence after refusing to retire. (MFB No. 501)

The Rules of the Game (La Règle du jeu)

Connoisseur CR 061

France 1938 Price £15.99

Certificate PG Director Jean Renoir



Wild in the country

★ The wild and wicked goings-on at a grand country house weekend are used as a mirror for a class-ridden French society just before the war, and a metaphor for its impending destruction. Considered Renoir's masterpiece. *Subtitles* B/W (MFB No. 193)

The Running Man/The Terminator

Braveworld STV 4001

USA 1987/1984 Price £14.99 (2 tapes)

Certificate 18 Directors Paul Michael Glaser/James Cameron

★ Cut-price, double-pack bicep action from Arnold Schwarzenegger in which he plays, firstly, an evil indestructible robot; and secondly, a saintly indestructible human. Guess which one is more fun. (MFB Nos. 657/613)

The Sacrifice (Offret)

Artificial Eye ART 026

Sweden/France 1986 Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director Andrei Tarkovsky
★ Tarkovsky's last film combines peasant mysticism with nuclear-age angst. With more than a hint of influence from Bergman, the story is told against the bleak landscape of a northern island off Sweden, and is infused with a melancholy mood. *Subtitles* (MFB No. 636)

The Salute of the Jugger

MCEG Virgin VVD 996
Australia 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director David Peoples
Rutger Hauer leads a savage team of juggers against all-comers in what looks suspiciously like Australian rules football – only with a dog skull for a ball. (MFB No. 682)

Sharky's Machine

Warner PES 22024
USA 1981 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Burt Reynolds
Reynolds directs himself as an Atlanta vice squad cop leading a dirty half dozen gang of law enforcers against city corruption. With Vittorio Gassman and Rachel Ward. (MFB No. 579)

She-Devil

MCEG Virgin VVD 1000
USA 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Susan Seidelman
Any resemblance to Fay Weldon's *Life and Loves of a She-Devil* must be regarded as fortuitous, but not every film offers Roseanne Barr opposite Meryl Streep. Streep reveals a flair for light comedy. (MFB No. 676)

Somewhere in Time

CIC Video VHR 1047
USA 1980 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Jeannot Szwarc
Christopher Reeve wills himself back to 1912 so that he can conduct a romance in Edwardian costume with Jane Seymour. This film is claimed by its distributors to be the most requested title in its back catalogue! (MFB No. 564)

Stowaway in the Sky

see The Red Balloon

Swann in Love (Un Amour de Swann)

Artificial Eye ART 022
France 1983 Price £15.99

Certificate 18 Director Volker Schlöndorff
★ The longest of French novels is elegantly abridged to a fleeting episode, acted by an Englishman (Jeremy Irons) and an Italian (Ornella Muti), photographed by a Swede (Sven Nykvist) and directed by a German. Very pretty. Subtitles (MFB No. 603)

The Terminator/The Running Man

see The Running Man

Two or Three Things I Know About Her (2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle)

Connoisseur CR 062
France 1966 Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director Jean-Luc Godard
★ A bored suburban mother spends one day a week as a prostitute in Paris. 'Elle' refers to the city not the woman and Godard concentrates on underlining and undermining the images with his own running commentary. Subtitles (MFB No. 443)



Enfant terrible: Catherine Demongeot in 'Zazie dans le métro'

The Wild Bunch

Warner PES 1014
USA 1969 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Sam Peckinpah
★ Peckinpah's Western masterpiece is missing ten or so minutes from the original running time – a small brutality compared with past hatchet jobs on his work. The outlaws are William Holden, Ernest Borgnine, Robert Ryan, Edmond O'Brien and Warren Oates. (MFB No. 429)

Wings of the Apache

Polygram MED 12562
USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director David Green
The US Air Cavalry exercise a cheerful shoot-to-kill policy on drug traffic mercenaries and malefactors in Columbia. With Tommy Lee Jones, Nicolas Cage and an improbably cast Sean Young. (MFB No. 682)

Young Guns II: Blaze of Glory

FoxVideo 1902
USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Geoff Murphy
One more gallop round the fictional territory inhabited by Billy the Kid and Pat Garrett. The cast's hotshots include



Marina Vlady: reflections of a city

Emilio Estevez and Kiefer Sutherland. (MFB No. 682)

Retail premiere

Ra: The Path of the Sun God

Connoisseur CRO60
UK 1990 Price £14.99

Certificate U Director/Animator Lesley Keen
Producer Jan Culik Screenplay Lesley Keen
Narration Tamara Kennedy, Michael Mackenzie 72 minutes

★ A Jungian interpretation of ancient Egyptian mythology that took four years to complete. Keen mixes animation with special optical effects and a musical narration to lull the viewer into a dreamlike state.

Retail collections

David Cronenberg Collection

The Brood

Canada 1979 Price £12.99

Rabid

Canada 1976 Price £12.99

Shivers

Canada 1974 Price £12.99
Video Gems RI 1466/1464/1465

Certificate 18 Director David Cronenberg
★ Three horror-schlock juvenilia from Canada's most famous cinéaste, now the respected director of *The Fly* and *Naked Lunch*. The strength of these films lies in the idea that the alien comes from within rather than from hell or outer space. The bad blood is spread around by (respectively) hypodermic slugs, vampire viruses and gynaecological malpractice, with predictably unpleasant results. (MFB Nos. 506/526/553)

Louis Malle Collection

Les Amants

France 1958 Certificate 15 Subtitles B/W

L'Ascenseur pour l'échafaud

France 1957 Certificate PG Subtitles B/W

Atlantic City

France/Canada 1980 Certificate 15

Le Feu follet

France/Italy 1963 Certificate 15
Subtitles B/W

Le Souffle au cœur

France/Italy/West Germany 1971
Certificate 18 Subtitles

Zazie dans le métro

France 1960 Certificate 15 Subtitles
Palace Classics PVC 4075A/
4076A/4073A/4078A/4080A/4081A
Price £15.99 each

Director Louis Malle

★ Fascinating round-up of some early films of this prolific director. If several of them have a serious air – suicide in *Le Feu follet*, incest in *Le Souffle au cœur*, adultery in *Les Amants* – others are splendidly unclassifiable, like the playful *Zazie*. (MFB Nos. 311/316/564/367/453/349)

Retail premiere collections

David Anderson: Works on Film

Connoisseur CRO59
UK 1977-1990 Price £14.99

Certificate U Director/Animator David Anderson Producers (Deadsy/Door) James Bradley, Barnaby Spurrier 55 minutes
★ A look at the work of innovative, award-winning animator David Anderson – including *Dreamland Express* (winner of a BAFTA award) and *Dreamless Sleep* – as well as a documentary examining the eclectic methods used by Anderson.

Švankmajer Volumes 1 & 2

Connoisseur CRO57/CRO58
Czechoslovakia 1964-1990
Price £14.99 each

Certificates PG/15 Director Jan Švankmajer 70 minutes/65 minutes
★ Two fantastic collections of short films from the Czech surrealist. The first volume of five shorts includes his first film – *The Last Trick* and the wonderfully sinister *Down to the Cellar*. In the second (with six shorts) there is a homage to Lewis Carroll (*Jabberwocky*) and a surreal look at the life of Da Vinci. (*Colour & B/W*. Some of the films were reviewed in MFB No. 630.)

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Film and Entertainment 1992

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The *International Dictionary of Film and Filmmakers* is the most highly acclaimed film reference book available. In five lavishly illustrated volumes, the Dictionary presents in-depth information on the world's most significant films, filmmakers, actors and technicians from the earliest days of cinema to the present and reflects the current concerns of film scholarship and criticism.

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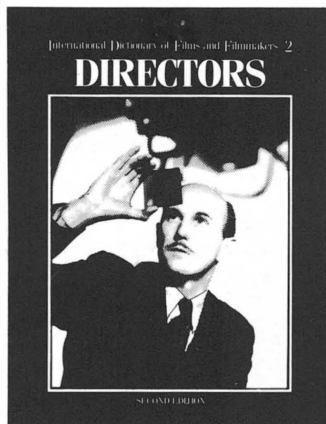
Each entry provides: a biography; a complete filmography/bibliography; and a signed article that discusses the director's life and works.

Among those directors included are: Woody Allen; Pedro Almodóvar; Ingmar Bergman; Busby Berkeley; Chen Kaige; Federico Fellini; John Ford; Peter Greenaway; John Grierson; Alfred Hitchcock; Raj Kapoor; Krzysztof Kieslowski; Fritz Lang; Yasujiro Ozu; G.W. Pabst; István Szabó; Andrzej Wajda and Franco Zeffirelli.

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Letters

Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight and Sound, British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL. Facsimile 071 436 2327

Death of Thames

From Roger Bolton

Marc Karlin challenges me to make a film about the ensuing row over the *Death on the Rock* programme "which resulted in Thames Television losing its franchise" (S&S March). Marc says this row was never documented. In fact I wrote a book about it, *Death on the Rock and Other Stories*, but as it's been remaindered Marc can be forgiven for not having read it.

I think it is unlikely that the row was the main cause of Thames losing its franchise. Carlton was determined to get hold of Thames and the publisher contractor route they chose made it extremely difficult to bid against them.

Once Mrs Thatcher had decided that broadcasting should be treated no differently from any other business then, effectively, our fate was sealed. I am sure that *Death on the Rock* confirmed her in the view that we were dangerous radicals, but the principles of the legislation already in place were enough to do for Thames.

I'm sure, however, there was much rejoicing in certain quarters.

Thames Television, London

Documentary class

From Paul Larkin Coyle

Regarding your editorial on documentary film-making (S&S March) – may I use that dirty four-letter word 'class' by way of a response? I know we are not supposed to use this word any more, but, in my experience, working-class people are far and away the largest 'range of people' who are excluded from film-making in the British Isles. Unless, like I did, you get a lucky break, there is just no way in. Why is this? And why is it that large numbers of people always assume that I am the researcher on all the film projects I work on?

BBC Belfast

Hear the praise

From Quentin Falk

I was extremely relieved to read Tom Charity's careful review of *Hear My Song* (S&S March). Relieved, as much as anything, to discover I hadn't gone completely mad in my own, perhaps even more jaded, opinion of a little film which is in severe danger from some quarters of becoming the most ludicrously overpraised British movie of 1992. Advance reports that Peter Chelsom's film is possibly the greatest British movie since the heyday of Ealing, or to a lesser extent, the high days of Bill Forsyth, have been greatly exaggerated.

The so-called 'spirit of Ealing' (evoked dangerously by American and British critics alike) and, latterly, Forsyth have tended to cast a dreadful thrall over much of recent British cinema, as much, maybe even more, than that dreaded rollcall 'Film Four and British Screen Present...' 'Nostalgia, whimsy and sleight of hand' – Charity's words – have in their various use and abuse contrived to sink a whole raft of

Spirit of Ealing:
'Hear My Song'



Chen Kaige's 'Life on a String'

recent British 'product', from *Killing Dad* to *Consuming Passions*. What then is the alternative to this tiresomely overworked strand? Original, muscular, writing with the courage of its own, contemporary, convictions and a vision that stretches beyond the confines of a television set. This isn't achieved merely by hurling pounds and pence at a cash-starved UK industry but by carefully harnessing the rarest in a pool of talent that isn't quite as deep as it clearly thinks it is.

Little Marlow

60s survey

From Alexander Walker

The review of Robert Murphy's *Sixties British Cinema* (S&S March) contains the statement: "until now there has been no survey of this decade's fascinating legacy of films". Happily, this is not the case. *Hollywood, England: The British Film Industry in the Sixties* was published by me in 1974 and has recently been reissued. I am surprised at your error or omission.

London

Bruce Carson, the reviewer, replies: Unlike Alexander Walker's entertaining, but highly selective book *Hollywood, England* Murphy's book does not just focus on the better known films of 60s auteurs like Lester, Losey, Schlesinger, Reisz, Richardson, Roeg and Russell. Instead, he is concerned to bring to our attention the less critically acclaimed films and genres of this era.

Thus as well as covering the more usual Kitchen Sink and Swinging London films, Murphy introduces chapters on social problem films and three key genres of the period: crime, comedy and horror. For example, he deals with the

massively popular series of *Carry On* comedies, as well as the important cluster of British horror films made by Hammer and other small independents in the 60s. These are just some examples of the areas and films that Alexander Walker's 1974 book does not cover. It is in this sense that I described Murphy's book as the first survey of 60s British cinema.

Wronged

From Tony Rayns

I'm credited with writing two reviews in your March issue, but both have been altered in ways that I find embarrassing – without any reference back to me.

My review of *Life on a String* has been massively cut and arbitrarily reparagraphed in a way that makes nonsense of the original reasoning and reduces my arguments to a caricature of themselves. It's no longer clear that I read the film as a reflection on its makers' experience of the Cultural revolution, and my comparison of this film with Tian Zhuangzhuang's *Horse Thief* has gone. My discussion of the 'blindness' metaphor has been curtailed and an entire paragraph about the film's sexual schema has been deleted. I particularly resent the cutting of most of what I had to say about the music, including the reference to the revealing detail that the old man's vocals are provided by rock-singer Wang Di.

My review of *The Lost Language of Cranes* has lost only a few sentences, but now contains the strangled neologism – "cruising-iest". What I wrote, of course, was "cruisist".

London

Offence

From Andy Kimpton-Nye

I can't imagine Jonathan Rosenbaum making offensive references to black people, women, gays, so why does he do so when mentioning people with learning difficulties in his review of Zhang Yuan's *Mama* (Festivals, S&S March)?

London

Promising scripts

Benjamin Woolley

Many things are claimed of computers, and anyone who has used one will know that such claims are almost always exaggerated. For example, they are supposed to make jobs quicker to do, a message currently being promoted by the software house Microsoft, which boasts in its latest advertising campaign that in five minutes, the time it takes a camel to drink ten gallons of water, or for the brain to lose more than 500 of its cells (or, though the advertisement does not mention this, for Bill Gates, Microsoft's founder, said to be the richest man in America, to earn an obscene amount of money), you can learn how to use a Windows program.

Windows is unpresently known as a GUI, a graphical user interface. Effectively, it is a way of dressing up the computer's screen so that all programs that run on it look roughly the same and work in roughly the same way. By the standards of computer advertising, Microsoft's claim is not particularly unreasonable. But you shouldn't go away with the idea that computers save time. They don't. They just invent new ways of wasting it.

Another promise was that the computer would create 'paperless' offices. In fact, it attracts paper, fills the office with innumerable drafts of half-finished word-processed documents, personalised form letters and the volumes of documentation that you need to misunderstand how the system works. Deciding to use computers, then, doesn't necessarily enhance life, but it certainly changes it. The question is, are you ready for the change?

This question is of particular relevance to the film world because it is one area that has remained relatively resistant to the technology, at least outside the obvi-

ous areas of special effects. But one area that looks like a particularly soft target for computerisation of some form or other is scriptwriting.

A script is complex, fiendishly so. Very tight specifications determine its layout and style. Different styles must be used for character names, dialogue, action, transitions, and so on. In the movie world, it was usually the job of a department called 'script services' to rework a writer's script into the proper format. However, with the introduction of word processing, software companies have started offering programs called 'script formatters' which will, they promise, do the job for you. I discovered just such a program, the 'Gadfly Script Formatter: A filesafe screenplay formatter', on a dial-up bulletin board. It works with a word processor called Word for Windows, produced by the aforementioned Microsoft, and is just the sort of program that Windows users like myself can supposedly learn in five minutes.

The Gadfly Script Formatter is a sort of parasite program (though not a computer virus), insinuating itself more or less seamlessly into the main body of Word and providing a lot of new buttons and toggles for the user to play with. It can be used to organise the text into appropriate styles, to paginate it so that scene numbers and continuation marks are printed at the top and bottom of each page, and to print the result as 'draft', 'master' or 'shooting' script, with each type automatically acquiring the relevant format. It can be used to annotate the script with notes and to organise it using an 'outline' (dividing it up, in other words, into headings and indented subheadings which can be used to manage the script's structure). And all of Word's multifarious facilities can be used as well: to check the spelling, even to

One area that looks like a particularly soft target for computerisation is scriptwriting. A script is complex, fiendishly so. Very tight specifications determine its layout and style

assess the grammar and writing style, giving a mark for clarity called the 'Fog Index'. (The grammar checker tells me of the previous sentence: 'It is preferable to avoid beginning a sentence with an And'. Apparently, this could cause confusion, though, the checker concedes, a conjunction at the beginning of a sentence 'can be used to powerful effect'. Phew.)

The question is whether such a program can help produce better scripts. Many writers reject word processing, some even typewriters, because the machinery gets in the way of their writing. Computers, the technophobes argue, encourage a casual attitude to composition, allowing the writer to slap things down in the knowledge that they can be easily edited.

Whatever the virtues of this argument – which probably depend more on personal working practices than some deeper issue about the nature of authorship – in the case of producing highly formatted, highly complex documents like film and TV scripts, a formatter like Gadfly's can free the scriptwriter from much of the clerical burden imposed by technical layout standards. Particular sections, such as key scenes, or particular types of text, such as dialogue, can be isolated and reviewed without the surrounding clutter; the order of scenes can be changed at the click and drag of a mouse without fear of upsetting the neatness of the result.

But then, such advantages are not achieved instantly. It takes time to learn how to use a formatter, partly because script formats are themselves so complicated, partly because the first rule of computing is that getting something to work as you want it to work always takes more time than you originally anticipated – time enough for a caravan of camels to drink their fill, or so it feels.

Professor Potemkin's competition

I fear the excitement of a new competition format made me forget to announce the winner of our February competition – Mrs Patricia Evans of London, who correctly identified the actors (Lana Turner and John Garfield) and the film in question, Tay Garnett's version of 'The Postman Always Rings Twice'. Her winning caption has one short-tempered character snapping to the door – "You go! I answered the doorbell yesterday".

Widespread interest has been generated by our new competition 'Cinephilia' and in our next issue we will announce the winner of the March competition. The correct answers, on an appropriate picture postcard, should be sent by 15 April

to Professor Potemkin at Sight and Sound, BFI, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL. The prizes this month are five box sets of 'Prospero's Books' (including a video, a biography of John Gielgud, a book about the film by Peter Greenaway and a CD of the soundtrack). A further five runners-up will receive a video and CD soundtrack of 'Edward II'. 'Prospero's Books' and 'Edward II' are both rental releases by Palace Premiere video. This month's special subject is Family Plots.

1. Mum refused all offers in 'The Ballad of the Sad Café', but her daughter was sold into sex slavery in 'The Handmaid's Tale'. Who are these two women?

2. When Peggy Sue got married, he got the role of her husband from his uncle. Who were these men?

3. A real-life mother and son acted out those roles in the 1985 Australian film 'The Boy who had Everything'. Who were they?

4. Below: They play father and daughter in 'Prospero's Books'. Name the actors and the first Shakespearian film the male actor appeared in.



5. Martin Sheen has three sons acting professionally. Name two of them.

6. A mother (cameo) and daughter (star) appear briefly together in 'Pacific Heights'. Who are they?

7. It seems that Irma La Douce is the sister of Dick Tracy. Under what names do they usually go?

8. One sings, and so did the other – whether in 'New York, New York' or 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow'. Identify the closely related women.

9. Werner Herzog's favourite wild man actor died recently. Who was he and who is his daughter?

10. Keith Carradine and Randy Quaid both had kid brother back-up when shooting 'The Long Riders'. Name the young gunslingers.



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Dianne Tammes

Flaherty Award
THE LEADER, THE DRIVER AND THE DRIVER'S WIFE (C4)
Nick Broomfield

At the Craft Awards the Post Office/BAFTA Annual Student Bursary was awarded to Felicity Moore (Editor)

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